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JESUS CRUCIFIED

READINGS AND MEDITATIONS

ON THE

Passion and Death of Our Redeemer

BY

REV. WALTER ELLIOTT

of the Paulist Fathers

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His Death."

—*Phil. iii., 10.*



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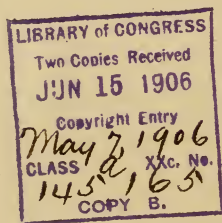
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P R E F A C E .

In the literature of our Redeemer's passion and death there are great authors, whose works are of permanent value for meditation on that most sacred subject. Such are St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Alphonsus, Ludolph the Saxon, the Augustinian Father Thomas of Jesus, and some others. But men must always write on this theme, giving us from time to time books of more or less merit, aiding devout souls to consider more intelligently the great events of our redemption, and contributing by new works to a fresh study of the ever ancient and ever new lessons of Christ's passion. These less gifted writers stimulate within their own circle of influence, however narrow, a more intimate familiarity with Jesus Crucified, and play a useful part in the current devotional life of the Christian people.

To this class the author would wish to belong. Wholly incapable of writing a book on our Redeemer's sufferings and death of enduring worth, his contribution to this supremely important theme will, he hopes, be found of some passing interest to ordinary Christians.

If he has succeeded in this, he asks a prayer for the least and the latest messenger from Calvary.

INTRODUCTION.

OUR SAVIOR'S FOREKNOWLEDGE AND PROPHECIES OF HIS PASSION.*

Jesus was always conscious of the fate that awaited Him. And although He had many joys, holding interior communion with the source of all bliss, the unveiled deity itself, with whose very nature He was united in the person of the divine Word, yet He was His whole life long essentially a Redeemer. Whatever occupied His thoughts, His preoccupation of mind was our redemption. And if His happiness was very great, especially in His

* The great dogma of the Atonement is thus expressed in the catechism of the Council of Trent, on the fourth article of the Apostles' Creed: "In His passion and death, the Son of God, our Savior, purposed the atonement and obliteration of the sins of all ages, by offering for them to His Father a full and superabundant satisfaction. And what adds to the sublimity of this atonement, Christ not only suffered for sinners, but sinners were also the authors and ministers of all the torments which He endured. . . . The passion of our Lord was our deliverance from sin; for, says St. John, 'He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood' (Apoc. i. 5); and the Apostle says: 'He hath quickened you together with Him, forgiving you all offences, blotting out the handwriting of the decree which was against us, which was contrary to us, and the same He took out of the way, fastening it to the cross' (Col. ii. 13). In the next place, it has rescued us from the tyranny of the devil, for our Lord Himself says: 'Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the princes of the world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself' (John xii. 31). He has also discharged the penalty due to our sins. And as no more grateful and acceptable sacrifice could have been offered to God, it has reconciled us to the Father (II. Cor. v. 19), appeased His wrath and propitiated His justice. Finally, by taking away our sins it has opened heaven to us, which was closed by the common sin of mankind. 'Having, therefore, brethren, a confidence in the entering into the sanctuary by the blood of Christ' (Heb. x. 19)."

earlier years, in the company of Mary and Joseph and many an Israelite without guile, yet from the moment of His conception till His last sigh upon the cross, the prevailing sentiment of His life was His identity with our fallen race and every member of it for all the purposes of atonement. He was always conscious that "Him (Christ) for us He (God) hath made sin, that we might be made the justice of God in Him" (II. Cor. v. 21).

His foreknowledge of His passion began with Jesus' life. And it must have been communicated to His mother also from the beginning. We may well believe that at the Annunciation, Mary was told of her Son's passion and death, and this was made yet plainer at the Presentation in the temple, when Simeon said to her: "This Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted; and thine own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed" (Luke ii. 34, 35). She was thus, after her Son, the first depository of the prophecy of Calvary, as she was to be the foremost associate of its sorrows.

The interior life of Jesus from His first moments was thus tinged with the gloom of Calvary. And His external devotions must have been from earliest childhood shaped and directed by the same over-mastering sense of His office as our advocate with His Father, and our substitute in bearing the penalty of our sins. To this was joined His thoughts and plans about the teaching of the truth of God, and the foundation of His Church to perpetuate that teaching and distribute the favors won for men by His death on the cross. Teacher of men and their Redeemer He was, and must always have felt Himself to be.

Hence His favorite prayers were the pleadings of an affectionate heart for the pardon of His guilty brethren. His devotional reading was for the most part about Himself in the ancient types and prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures; how could it be otherwise, since these sad pages were pictures of His own destiny as our representative before His Father's judgment seat? With what feelings Jesus must have read the words of *Isaias*: "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearers" (*Isaias* liii. 7). The spirit of sacrifice in the heart of Jesus gave to those words a painful fascination. And all of that marvelous chapter was both an oracle of woe and a source of light and strength to His soul, forearming Him with a fortitude impossible for us to comprehend. Read the twenty-first Psalm, and feel its awful power of sadness, and then imagine, if you can, what Jesus felt as day after day He read this plain forecast of His betrayal, nailing to the cross, torment of thirst, insults of enemies, and at last death. And read the seventy-eighth and eighty-seventh Psalms, and as their awful tones stir your heart, think how Jesus must have read them, every word of their plaintive messages being addressed to Himself and treating of the last and greatest events of His own career.

We can also imagine His interest in the ancient types of His person and office. He saw Himself foreshadowed by Abel, the innocent victim of his own brother's hate (*Gen.* iv. 8); by guileless Isaac offered by his own father to prove his fidelity to God (*Gen.* xxii. 6); most vividly foretold by the lamb of the Passover, whose blood, sprinkled on the doorposts of the Israelites in Egypt to warn away the destroying angel, was the emblem of His

own blood poured out for the world's salvation at the gate of Jerusalem, and sprinkled upon every elect soul (Exod. xii. 5); of the brazen serpent, lifted up in the desert to cure a stricken people of both the guilt of their sin and its penalty (Num. xxi. 8).

There can be no manner of doubt but that He was ever offering His Father painfully earnest prayers of repentance for our sins. It is in this sense that Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with affliction (Isaias liii. 3). All that we mean by contrition for sin, compunction of heart, shame for misdeeds, Jesus felt continually; grief for sin was His set and established state of mind. Sorrow for our offences, deep and continuous, was habitual with Him, as was His realization that He was one of us and the leader of us all, involved with us in all that is meant by sin and iniquity except personal guilt—the shame, the agony of remorse, the sting of conscious ingratitude, the dread of eternal loss.

Be it remembered, too, that while His knowledge of our sinfulness was absolute, at the same time His sensitiveness to the injury done His Father was perfect. We know that His love for us, both as a ruined race and as individual culprits, was the highest endowment of His human nature, next to that of His love for His Father; and that these two sentiments were ever in conflict in His soul, and ever resulted in a painful victory of pity over justice.

Another thought of much importance in understanding our Redeemer's mind, is that His sweetest consolation must have been His forecast that the repentant sinner's hope of pardon and its final possession was to be entirely dependent on His own bitter sufferings and death. Thus,

the anticipation of His sufferings, if it saddened our Savior, also inspired Him with zeal for His atonement. Knowing beforehand all the terrible details of His fate, He accepted them willingly, and even longed for them. "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized," He said, "and how am I straightened until it be accomplished?" (Luke xii. 50). Such was the significance of His baptism by John, which Jesus sought at the very outset of His public life. He took His place humbly among His precursor's penitents, confessing we know not what summary of the sins of mankind as if they were all His own, and making no distinction between Himself and the great multitude of sinners gathered by John's call to repentance.

After Jesus had begun to preach He almost immediately foretold, at least obscurely, His crucifixion. At His first visit to Jerusalem He said to Nicodemus—destined to take Jesus' corpse down from His cross: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (John iii. 15).

At His transfiguration He discoursed with Moses and Elias "of His decease that He should accomplish in Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 31). Doubtless the topic of this unearthly conference was made known by Him to the three disciples who were with Him on Mount Tabor. They could by no means understand why, in the midst of His glory, He should discourse with these exalted personages about His death. The day was yet distant when they would exclaim with St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by

whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. vi. 14). They were yet to appreciate that it was precisely by His death that He was to win His cause and theirs, as well as show the extent of God's love for men. His affectionate heart would dwell on the very details of His death in company with these holy men of old, whom He had called from their rest in Limbo to counsel with Him about God's purposes in sending His Son on earth. Stripes, thorns, spittings, nails, and the awful pangs of death were the object of His most ardent desires, and therefore the choice subject of His discourse with those grand old heroes of the ancient religion of God, and that even amid the heavenly splendors of His transfiguration. They would fully understand Him and would say: "It is good for us to be here"; but in a different spirit from Peter, knowing as they did that the sufferings of Christ about which they had discoursed with Him were to be the sovereign remedy for man's fatal malady, and the perfect manifestation of the divine love for sinners. Little did the disciples realize all this; little do Christians generally understand the relation of suffering to glory.

Towards the close of our Lord's second year among His disciples He began to impress upon them with much earnestness that His time with them was short, and that He would end His life by falling into the hands of His enemies and being executed as a criminal. And doubtless the increasing sadness of His manner tallied with the more frequent mention of His passion. The actual instrument of His death was suggested by His first mention of the cross, which was in connection with the virtue of self-denial: "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me" (Luke ix. 37).

At the very time when Jesus was the object of almost universal popular worship, He repeatedly cast a damper on His disciples' spirits by showing them what would happen at His final visit to Jerusalem. As in the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew (21-23): "Jesus began to show to His disciples, that He must go to Jerusalem, and to suffer many things from the ancients and scribes and chief priests, and to be put to death, and the third day rise again." Against this dreadful doom Peter boldly protested; "Lord," said he, "be it far from Thee, this shall not be unto Thee." And Jesus rebuked him, and through him all the other disciples, who doubtless shared his feelings of repugnance: "Go behind Me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto Me, because thou savorest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men."

Meanwhile He was careful to affirm His entire liberty of choice in His passion and death. He did so long before He died, and by deeds as well as by words, holding His enemies off from Him in various ways plainly supernatural, and sometimes strikingly miraculous; because, as He said to His disciples, His time was not yet come. His freedom was the all necessary condition of His merit, which was to win for us His Father's love. Hence He said to the Jews: "Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself; and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of My Father" (John x. 17, 18). Sometimes His prophecy was given under a figure, as: "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep" (John x. 11). Or by a parable, as that of the

wicked husbandman killing the son and heir of the lord of the vineyard (Matt. xxi. 39).

He multiplied these saddening forecasts during His last journey to Jerusalem. On the very eve, it would seem, of His triumphal entry into the city, at a banquet which might almost be called a public one, His head and feet were anointed by Mary Magdalen. He distinctly affirmed that this solemn act of homage was done for His approaching burial, and He repeated and insisted on that prophecy (Mark xiv. 3-9).

A little later, and after He had ended a long discourse to a great multitude of His followers, He said in private to His more intimate disciples: "You know that after two days shall be the pasch, and the Son of Man shall be delivered up to be crucified" (Matt. xxvi. 2). This was but reminding them of what He had said not long before, the most detailed forecast of His end: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests, and to the scribes and ancients, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles, and they shall mock Him, and spit on Him, and scourge Him, and kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again" (Mark x. 33, 34). St. Luke tells us (xviii. 34) that this amazed the Apostles; and if it distressed them, what deepening shadows must have been gathering about His own soul. They were slow and dull men, but at last they began to realize His awful purpose. He was going to leave behind Him His miraculous powers, and, all helpless and alone, to deliver Himself up to the fierce hate of His enemies. But the disciples were now afraid to protest, or even to question Him; His severe admonition to Peter was not forgotten.

It is true that He often coupled with the prophecy of His death that of His resurrection. But if this aroused their imaginations it did not relieve their distress. And what did He mean by the words "I shall rise again"? They knew what it meant to be killed; they were shocked by His plain statement that at His next visit to Jerusalem the chief priests would seize Him and kill Him. But "rise again"? What did that mean? And of what use would that be if He and they had been already vanquished and ruined? What would His poor ghost be able to do against His triumphant enemies?

As to the other parties to the impending tragedy, it is certain that a year before our Redeemer's death, the leading Pharisees and Sadducees had made up their minds to kill Him; and this was just about the time He began more plainly to foretell His fate. The formal decision, as we may call it, to destroy Him was taken after the raising of Lazarus from the grave. The chief priests and the leading Pharisees called a council, at which it was quickly agreed that Jesus must by some means and in some way be put to death. "From that day therefore they devised to put Him to death" (John xi. 46-54).

But their devisings all failed. Jesus taught daily in the temple, and in spite of a network of spies and emissaries, He traversed the public streets mornings and evenings, openly and with entire impunity. This was because He was to fix His own times and moments, and also because one of His own disciples was to be the personal instrument of His destruction. Meanwhile His forebodings afflicted His spirit deeply. "Now is My soul troubled," said He. "And what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this cause I came unto this hour" (John xii. 27). This is the twilight of the gloom

that overshadowed Him in the Garden of Olives. But besides being hindered by the self-bestowed immunity of Jesus, the conspirators were embarrassed by other causes. "Many of the chief men (of the Pharisees) also believed in Him" (John xii. 42), and doubtless the chief plotters feared that they would offer some resistance. The masses of the people, too, were enthusiastic friends of Jesus (Matt. xxvi. 5); they had yet to be corrupted and bullied into acquiescence in His destruction.

The plotters were, in fact, at a standstill in their schemes, when Judas, the infamous wretch who had been nourished in the very bosom of his divine Master, gave them their opportunity for arresting Him, and for doing it safely and secretly. Thus the arrest of Jesus was planned by a traitorous Apostle and carried out under his direction. "Then went one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, to the chief priests, and said to them: 'What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?' But they appointed him thirty pieces of silver. And from thenceforth he sought opportunity to betray Him" (Matt. xxvi. 14-16).

We now come to the Last Supper. It was the celebration of the paschal solemnity by the eating of the lamb of the Passover, the ancient type of our Redeemer and of His being slain for the salvation of mankind. But the Last Supper is especially memorable on account of the institution of the Blessed Eucharist, by means of which Jesus was to perpetuate to all time and distribute to all men the benefits of the atonement to be consummated on the morrow. He had ardently longed for this hour of affectionate leave-taking, and of imparting to us His own self in the sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion. As He sat down with His Apostles, He said to

them: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you, before I suffer" (Luke xxii. 15).

As the end was now at hand, Jesus was wholly absorbed in love for His disciples, the sorrowful love of a Redeemer. St. John says that "Jesus, knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who are in the world, He loved them to the end" (John xiii. 1). His washing of His disciples' feet then took place. It was a farewell ceremony, invented by His affection, because He knew "that He goeth to God" (John xiii. 3). His efforts to save Judas from treason and suicide followed. It is one of the most touching episodes in all this heart-moving history—an effort futile as to Jesus, but, as an example of divine patience, very efficacious to save multitudes of other sinners.

His long discourse to His disciples was now begun, being a summary of His most spiritual teachings, and ending with His sublime prayer to His Father for His Church and its pastors. He interrupted these utterances by foretelling the rout and dispersion of the Apostles and Peter's denial of Him that night, as well as by His mysterious instruction about the two swords, all plainly prophetic of His impending fate—plainly prophetic to us who know the whole history so well, and whose minds have been formed to His faith by the knowledge of what afterwards happened; not so to His Apostles. "Lord," said St. Thomas, "we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" (John xiv. 5). Their hearts were saddened by His words, but their minds were none the less mystified. It was midway in His discourse that He instituted the Blessed Eucharist, the anticipation

in a marvelous form of His death the following day, as well as its everlasting memorial. "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye, and eat; this is My body, which shall be delivered for you; this do for the commemoration of Me. In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: This chalice is the new testament in My blood, which shall be shed for you; this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me. For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come" (I. Cor. xi. 23-26; Luke xxii. 17-20). Thus He made the greatest act of our religion the memorial of the greatest act of His life, namely, His death. He had appropriately reserved its institution to "the same night in which He was betrayed."

Thus passed the earlier hours of that memorable night, the eve of His crucifixion. He had devoted the time to His Apostles alone. He had washed their feet most humbly. He had celebrated the paschal banquet with them, as a Hebrew father amongst his dearest children. He had instituted the great Sacrament of our Altars. He had made a desperate effort to save Judas. He had sternly warned Peter of his denial of Him; and even as He did so, He lodged a seed of hope in that Apostle's bosom against the almost inevitable temptation to despair, foretelling him that he would be converted from his momentary defection. He had taught them, during His discourse, very explicitly, the most essential principle of their religious life, the indwelling of the divine spirit in the Christian Church and Christian soul. He had recalled to their minds all His fundamental teach-

ings. And His affectionate heart had fired His every word with love, so that among all the sacred writings there are none to compare with these chapters—xiii.-xvii.—of St. John.

At last His hour was come, He must go forth to His death. He lifted up His voice and solemnly intoned a Psalm. They all joined in the plaintive chant, and sang the inspired words their religion and their race with deep emotion. Then He led them out into the night, all resplendent with the beams of the paschal moon. But its brightness mocked their souls, which were oppressed with gloom, as they followed their beloved Master to the Mount of Olives. Who can tell the feelings of His heart? But to study His feelings and to narrate His sufferings is the task now before us.

PART I.

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

CHAPTER I.

The Treason of Judas.

Then one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, he that was about to betray Him, said: Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the purse, carried the things that were put therein. Jesus therefore said: Let her alone, that she may keep it against the day of My burial. For the poor you have always with you; but Me you have not always. And Satan entered into Judas, who was surnamed Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And he went and discoursed with the chief priests and the magistrates how he might betray Him to them. And he said to them: What will you give me, and I will deliver Him to you. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him thirty pieces of silver. And he promised. And from henceforth he sought opportunity to betray Him, in the absence of the multitude (Matt. xxvi. 14-16; Mark xiv. 10-11; Luke xxii. 3-6; John xii. 4-8).

And when supper was done (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him) . . . Jesus began to wash the feet of his disciples. . . . He

NOTE.—The passages of Scripture at the heads of chapters are the descriptions of the events under consideration given by the Evangelists. Their different accounts are in each case blended together into one, omitting only verbal repetitions. A few texts from other parts of Scripture are occasionally added. Taken altogether, these headings form the complete inspired history of the passion.

said to them: . . . He that eateth bread with Me shall lift up his heel against me. . . . When Jesus had said these things He was troubled in spirit. And he said: Amen, I say to you, that one of you is about to betray Me. Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table, one of the Twelve, who dippeth with Me his hand in the dish, he shall betray Me. The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed. It were better for him, if that man had not been born.

And Judas that betrayed Him, answering, said: Is it I, Rabbi? He saith to him: Thou hast said it. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter, therefore, beckoned to him and said to him: Who is it of whom He speaketh? He, therefore, leaning on the breast of Jesus, saith to Him: Lord, who is it? Jesus answered: He it is to whom I shall reach bread dipped. And when he had dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the morsel, Satan entered into him. And Jesus said to him: That which thou dost, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew to what purpose He said this unto him. For some thought, because Judas had the purse, that Jesus had said to him: Buy those things which we have need of for the festival-day; or that he should give something to the poor. He, therefore, having received the morsel, went out immediately. And it was night. When he therefore was gone out, Jesus said: Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. . . . Father, those whom Thou gavest Me have I kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture may be fulfilled (Matt. xxvi. 21-25; Mark xiv. 18-21; Luke xxi. 21-23; John xiii. 21-31).

The fall of Judas was first indicated by his contempt for the penitent Magdalen. He despised her act of love in anointing the feet of Jesus with costly spices. Why is this waste? he protested. Why did she not give the price of the ointment to me for the use of the poor; and this he said "because he was a thief." It is therefore cer-

tain that he had already gravely transgressed by stealing the offerings of his Master's benefactors, committed to him for the daily wants of the little company and for distribution to the poor.

So it has come to this: in the work of our salvation Jesus must mourn over an Apostle who stole money from Him and his brother Apostles, and then robbed the poor; and finally traded away his Master's very life for money.

We thus know what devil it was that entered into Judas, made all welcome and at home—the demon of avarice. How strange that love of money should gain mastery in the household of Jesus, who was without scrip or purse, roof or home, and a divine model of disinterestedness; and as He practised, so He constantly preached, contempt for all worldly possessions. In spite of this, and in the immediate companionship of the poor Man of Nazareth, Judas first gradually and insensibly, then deliberately and steadfastly, loved money. At last he loved it well enough to sell his Master for it.

The hatred of the chief priests and the covetousness of Judas were well mated. Said the one party: "If you give me money, I will give you Jesus." "Done," said the other, "and glad of the bargain. 'And they were glad.'" Well might they be. Here was one of His most intimate friends offering to sell Jesus for money, and for no great sum at that—to sell His very kisses. Their hopes were at once restored, they now had their dreaded enemy almost entrapped. And, besides, such an offer as that of Judas could mean—so they must have thought—no less than a general defection among the disciples of the Nazarene. And the price demanded, how trifling it seemed to those men. Later on they will publicly give up

their very race and nation to idolatrous Cæsar to compass the death of Jesus; now they have only to pay thirty pieces of silver to get Him in their power.

It was after thus bargaining with the chief priests that Judas came and took his usual place at his Master's table. In this he was playing the part of a spy, in order the more effectually to play the part of a traitor. He went there to make sure that his victim would keep His custom, by going that night to pray with His disciples in the Garden of Olives, for that would facilitate His arrest by the chief priests. Imagine, if you can, the sorrow of Jesus at all this, for He knew it all perfectly well: that one of His Apostles would betray Him to His enemies, and for money; would not wait to be tempted by them, but would take the first step himself and go of his own accord to bargain for His price; and then would carefully arrange the time and place of His arrest.

Imagine, too, what a sore heart Jesus had as, when the supper was over, He lovingly washed the feet of Judas, who He knew had already betrayed Him. How He longed to be allowed to wash that man's soul, spotted with the crime of treason against his divine Master. We can hardly doubt but that Jesus secretly appealed to Judas while washing and drying his feet, since He did so soon after and more than once and most pointedly, almost publicly. Perhaps our Redeemer managed to whisper: Judas, dost thou remember the words of the prophet about Me? "He that eateth bread with Me, shall lift up his heel against me" (John xiii. 18). Wilt thou spurn Me with this foot that I am washing and kissing, thou that I have loved so well, thou that hast eaten and drunk with Me and lived with Me for three years, thou,

My Apostle? Wilt thou deliver Me up to My enemies to be crucified?

And so Jesus washed the feet of Judas. If the traitor outranked all sinners that night, Jesus excelled even his baseness by His charity in washing his feet.

Jesus was not done with Judas yet by any means. For when, after the washing of the feet, they all sat down again at the supper table, He placed Judas near Himself, determined upon another effort to save him. How deeply He must have felt the prophet's words: "If My enemy had reviled Me, I would verily have borne with it. And if he that hated Me had spoken great things against Me, I would perhaps have hidden Myself from him. But thou, a man of one mind, My guide and My familiar, who didst take sweetmeats together with Me" (Ps. liv. 13-15).

The endeavor that Jesus now made to save Judas was an open one. It was customary for the members of a Jewish household to dip bread into the gravy of the pascal dish and eat it together as a token of family union and affection, a ceremony which Jesus had delayed by washing His disciples' feet. As they began to reach their hands towards the dish, Jesus suddenly exclaimed that one of them eating with Him was about to betray Him, and this He said with evident emotion. And He proceeded: "One of the Twelve, who dippeth with Me his hand in the dish, he shall betray Me. The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed. It were better for him, if that man had not been born." As He spoke these awful words, He pushed His hand against that of Judas, perhaps grasped it—that hand which itched for the clutch of money rather than the grasp of Jesus'

love. Our Redeemer managed to conceal from the other Apostles His close contact with Judas' hand, but His voice was loud, His emotion was evident, and His words reflected upon the whole company, and involved them all in mutual suspicion.

All the innocent ones cried out together: "Is it I, Rabbi?" And so did Judas—how could he help it? He alone was answered, and being close to Jesus it was done in a whisper: "Thou hast said it." Jesus hoped that this direct accusation would terrify the false disciple and save him by fear, as he was proof against the appeal of love. But the attempt failed, and now Jesus for the present gave him up.

But John, being, as is evident, next to Jesus on the other side, was prompted by Peter to make a more pointed inquiry as to who was the culprit: "Lord, who is it?" Then Jesus said: "He it is to whom I shall reach bread dipped." And He gave the piece of bread to Judas. The secret was out, the Lord had told his faithful disciples who was the spy and the traitor among them. Yet not clearly enough; for Peter and John did not fully understand, and the Lord knew this well. But He gained His purpose, which was to hasten Judas' departure, all present hope of saving him now being gone.

After Judas ate that morsel, Satan took entire possession of him, and Jesus saw it. His old eagerness to suffer the last penalty of our sins returned upon Him, and He positively hurried the spy away upon his dreadful errand, saying: "That which thou dost, do quickly." And Judas arose and left the house immediately. A gleam of holy joy is in the words of Jesus which followed the traitor's exit: "Now is the Son of Man glori-

fied, and God is glorified in Him." All this preceded, as many think, the institution of the Holy Communion; at which, according to these authorities, the traitor was not present.

And thus parted Jesus and Judas in the supper room, to meet again in the Garden of Olives, when our Redeemer, betrayed and ruined, would yet make one last effort to save His betrayer.

And so our Redeemer went on with the institution of the Eucharist. Whilst Judas was breathlessly running to the chief priests to hurry forward the event which would earn him his blood-money, while he was gathering the soldiers to arrest Jesus and deliver Him to death, Jesus was giving Himself away in the Holy Communion to every affectionate follower—body and blood, soul and divinity. And later in the night, while Judas was advancing at the head of a band of soldiers to destroy Him, Jesus was waiting for him in the Garden of Olives, weeping for the sins of men, sorrowful even unto death, sweating blood in an agony of love.

Thus the betrayal of Christ and the love of money are inseparably joined in our sacred history; let those who are eager money-getters bear it in mind. Behold the love that is strong enough to conquer love for Christ, and that in the breast of an Apostle. He was a man chosen by Jesus as His special friend and associate, and had lived with Him for three long years. Every hour of that time the love of Jesus for men, and especially for the favorite few of whom Judas was one, went on increasing until it tormented Him with the desire to die for them, and it overflowed at last in His heart's blood. And on Judas' part, whatever original love he may have had for his

Master, it steadily grew weaker, and love of money grew stronger, until it drove him to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

"Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend, and no weight of gold and silver is able to countervail the goodness of his fidelity" (Eccles. vi. 15). Not so thought this Apostle; thirty pieces of silver outweighed "the goodness of his fidelity" to Jesus. Our Redeemer went very far in His suffering for us in choosing to bear the pain of betrayal by a trusted and intimate friend, and that on account of money, and no very large sum at that. Jesus did not easily murmur at affliction. But of the treason of Judas He complained, not only to the traitor himself, but also to the other Apostles.

It would seem as if nothing that man in his malice can do shall force Jesus from His undeviating course of patience with sinners. Why did He not expel Judas on the spot? The Jews easily expelled transgressors from their synagogues; and here is the worst criminal of all history intruding himself disguised among the chosen members of Christ's flock, and in league with the very wolves ravaging outside the fold. Yet Jesus bore even with Judas at the Last Supper and strived again and again to save him even to the end.

Every friend of our Redeemer feels like saying: If Judas sells Jesus I will buy Him. I will sell myself into slavery for Him. I know His worth, as He has shown that He knows mine. "He loved me and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20), and I will give all that I have for Him and all that I am. He shall be mine at the expense of my every joy, or rather my only joy is in suffering servitude for His sake, as He did for mine.

CHAPTER II.

Why Jesus Began His Passion with the Agony in the Garden.

When Jesus had said these things, He went forth with His disciples, according to His custom, over the brook Cedron, to the Mount of Olives, to a farm which is called Gethsemani, where there was a Garden, into which He entered with His disciples (Matt. xxvi. 30-36; Mark xiv. 26-32; Luke xxii. 39; John xviii. 1).

Our Savior's purpose in going to the Garden of Olives was twofold. He would spend His last moments of freedom in treating again and finally with His Father about our salvation, and He would facilitate His arrest; He knew that it was there that Judas would seek Him to deliver Him up.

It was a place apart. There He could for a while be secure from interruption in His sad but intensely desired communication with His Father, receive His last instructions, and renew His compact for our redemption. He would thus fully realize what was meant by the great task before Him, and at a spot within a few paces of where He was actually to begin it.

It was His purpose, also, to bear the brunt of His sufferings in His interior spirit; for it is the soul's cross that cuts the deepest. Jesus would generously assume our inward miseries to the uttermost degree, as the prophet had said of Him: "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isaias liii. 4). Thus it was in the Garden that Jesus formed and fitted His mind to the

spiritual atonement for us, as afterwards He fitted His body to the outward torment of the cross on Calvary. He willed that a perfect knowledge of our wickedness, an absorbed consideration of our malice, and a deliberate acceptance of every penalty of our sins, should go before His outward suffering for us. This renewal of all His previous intention precedes the final act of redemption.

In the Garden Jesus willed to see more clearly than ever before how much His Father loved us and how ungratefully we had treated Him. His sorrow for us was thereby made an offering yet more worthy, not only of His perfect human sympathy, but even of His divine compassion; so that "The charity of God and the patience of Christ" (II. Thess. iii. 5) are made equal in the mind of Jesus at Gethsemani.

Thus it was in the Garden of Olives that Jesus did more than die for us. To offer up His life would seem enough; but it was not so to Him. A generous nature would perhaps die for a good man, says St. Paul (Rom. v. 7), taking on himself a friend's unjust punishment. But Jesus intervened between me, His bitter enemy, and a most just sentence against me, assuming Himself the penalty due a bad man and an enemy of His Father—a charity truly divine; and this He did for all sinners on Calvary. But in the Garden He did more. He there assumed, as far as perfect innocence could, not only the sinner's doom, but also the sinner's interior sense of guilt, remorse, abandonment, and damnation; and then the deepest contrition possible even to a God-Man. This He offered for the crimes of all our sinful race.

Another reason for the agony in the Garden is that Jesus so loved to suffer for us, that He determined to

undergo His pains by anticipation, deliberately forecasting them in His mind and enduring them beforehand. Here was the fulfilment of His desire to give us a surplus of merit and His Father a superfluity of recompense. This He had indeed chosen to do, as we have seen, from the beginning of His life on earth; but now He would resume all His foreknowledge of His passion into one hour of concentrated bitterness. Such was His fulness of sympathy for us.

He knew well that when all was done He could not suffer in retrospect; His wounds after His resurrection will pour only torrents of joy into His soul. His memory of the passion is to be an eternal bliss to Him. Therefore He would suffer as much as possible in prospect.

Nor did He view His approaching sufferings through the consoling medium of His certain resurrection. On the contrary, He viewed the triumph of His resurrection through the intolerable pains of His passion and death. Foreseeing them all most clearly, every coming torment of His body and soul was a present agony; it was not to be alleviated by the certainty of a triumph which lay beyond.

Again, in meditating on Jesus in the Garden, we must appreciate that here it was that He most closely identified Himself with us, and let us well remember, that not only did He take on Himself the sins of all men, but He bore our sins and was involved with us in the consequences of our guilt, making Himself personally responsible with His Father for our particular wickedness. This gives a much more personal character to His love for us as shown in the Garden. It was His most definite interior act of identification with each one of us. He is each

one's substitute in the Father's awful court: "Him (Christ) for us He (God) hath made sin, that we might be made the justice of God in Him" (II. Cor. v. 21); my own special sinfulness being herein considered by both Father and Son no less than the sinfulness of the whole race of Adam. Jesus is the Redeemer not only of all men in general but of each one in particular. "He would have done much less for me," says St. Ambrose, "had He not taken on Himself my feelings; He took on Him my sorrow, that He might now give me joy." And He has thus earned of me the tribute of an intimately personal sympathy with the sorrows of His passion, and by a peculiarly sacred title. For Jesus is to be pitied by me not only because He suffers most unjustly, most intensely and for the race to which I belong, but much more because He suffers my pains, in my stead.

In all religion nothing is more necessary than to appreciate that Jesus has so loved us, each and all, as to offer Himself in our stead to save us—that He does actually stand for us, that He ardently desires and willingly chooses to be our proxy, personally taking our place; and that the offended Father accepts Him as such. To realize this is, we repeat, the most necessary thing in all life—and the most difficult. It is the one thing gained best by meditating on the Agony in the Garden, showing as it does how the Father accepts and appoints Jesus as my victim, and how He in turn most willingly takes my place under the anger of God. If I in turn accept Him and appoint Him as my Savior with a heart full of love, He presently strikes me sorrowful with His own sorrow for my sins, and this He does by the infusion of His Holy Spirit. The grace of repentance is thus the work of the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, instilling into my soul the fruits of the passion of Christ. Therefore the study of Jesus in the Garden is "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost" (II. Cor. xiii. 13).

Another very appropriate thought is this. Entering upon the consideration of our Redeemer's passion, we are struck with the excess of His sufferings, knowing as we do that His least offering of sorrow for us was enough to save us. But let us remember that if "Much less of suffering was sufficient for saving us, yet what was sufficient for our salvation was not sufficient for His love," as says Father Thomas of Jesus. And that devout author adds that all the amazing excess of Christ's love is not enough to hinder men from continuing to insult Him by their sins.

Let it not be so with us. For consider that the purpose of Christ is not simply to stop sin, but to win the sinner to love God. What better plan for this than suffering in his stead? If I can be moved from aversion of, to love for, God by any means at all, it is by the knowledge that the very one whom I have injured has so deeply loved me as to suffer Himself the penalty of my offence in all its rigor. Every spark of manhood's nobility, every least capacity for gratitude, all the better traits of my nature are at once deeply affected. With this the grace of God acts, and I begin to detest my sins and to love my Redeemer with all sincerity.

CHAPTER III.

"Sorrowful Unto Death."

And He said to His disciples: Sit you here until I go yonder and pray. And He taketh Peter and James and John with Him, and He began to fear and to be heavy, to grow sorrowful and to be sad. And He saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here and watch with Me. And going a little further He was withdrawn away from them a stone's cast (Matt. xxvi. 36-38; Mark xiv. 32-34).

Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, in becoming our Redeemer clothed Himself with our humanity, making it His own nature. And this was not assumed as if it were a disguise, in order that He might save us by being reputed one of our fallen race; no, much more than that, essentially more. He also clothed Himself by sympathy with our consciousness of guilt, our feelings of shame, our tendency to despair. He was our substitute not only in the outward but in the inward misery of sin, and, thank God, in the contrition for sin. The degree of this sorrow He describes by the terrible word, death: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."

God sent "His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," says St. Paul (Rom. viii. 3); yea, and also in the likeness of a sinful soul. The sinful flesh of man hails his salvation in the suffering flesh of Christ, a sin-offering on the cross for both our bodies and souls. But the sinful spirit of man adores its peculiar atonement in the agony

of the spirit of Christ in the Garden: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."

Death! What word is so dreadful; what sorrow is like sorrow on account of death at and after the loss of a loved one? What terror equal to the dread of death in a sinner's soul—nay, often in a just man's soul? On this account, and to ward off from us a sinful death, "Christ," says St. Chrysostom, "by His agony enabled His faithful ones not to fear death, but patiently and even joyfully to meet it from their hope in the resurrection, saying with Osee and St. Paul, as triumphing over death, 'Death is swallowed up in victory' (I. Cor. xv. 55)."

And this victory over the pain of death is won by Jesus making our sins His own, and mourning for them with a deathly grief; "for the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). "The sorrows of death have compassed me, and the perils of hell have found me" (Ps. cxiv. 3). Thus spoke our Redeemer by the Psalmist, as He foresaw Himself mourning over our sinfulness, especially our sinful death.

Everything we know of Him shows that Jesus was one of those affectionate natures called sympathetic, being extremely sensitive to the distress of others; this was one of His human perfections. Jesus was easily moved to tears. He wept over Jerusalem even as He launched against her His Father's anathema. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, though He knew that He was immediately to embrace him a living man; He wept because He saw Mary and Martha weeping. How much rather would He be sorrowful unto tears of deathly bitterness, when He knew that multitudes of men would laugh at their sins who ought to weep tears of blood.

Jesus prizes naturally this trait in us—a readiness of tears at the distress of others. He had said: "Blessed are they that mourn" (Math. v. 5). And foremost among mourners our Redeemer places Himself, whose sorrow is solely sympathetic and for the sake of others. And His favorite mourners are those who know and see and lament, as He did, what is the only "evil and bitter thing" of life, forsaking God by sin (Jer. ii. 19). How shall these mourners for their brethren be comforted, but as Jesus was, by knowing that the more they mourn over other men's sinfulness, the more truly are they God's children, brethren and imitators of God's only begotten Son; and that their painful efforts to save souls are never exerted in vain.

If all mourned over sin as they do over death, then would they be like Jesus, and sin would vanish from among men. All who enjoy life must die, all who are happy in one another's company must be sorrowfully parted, and all who enjoy the pleasures of this world must at last be torn away from them; all must die and all must therefore mourn. But as all death comes from sin, so does sin generate every kind of death. All death-dealing sorrow comes from sin, and therefore all life-giving sorrow comes from contrition for sin, for contrition is mourning for sin in company with Jesus sorrowful unto death for our life's sake. Sin is the fountain head of the bitter waters of our life; for every pain is born of the guilt of sin.

Here then is my comfort, the company of Jesus in my mourning. He mourns for exactly the same cause as I do in my contrition, for He has made my sins His own. The company of the Son of God in my sorrow gives me

mighty courage to approach the divine throne craving for pardon—courage even in the face of approaching death. But let me ask myself: Will it ever happen me to suffer acute sorrow for other people's sins? When shall I begin "to fear and to be heavy" because my neighbor is in danger of damnation?

You will perhaps object that the sins Jesus mourned for were not His own, and hence could not be the cause of such pain to Him; sin is guilt and guilt He has not the least. But the answer is plain. Guilt Jesus has none; but if sin be guilt it is much besides; it is misfortune and that the most direful; deadly peril here, deadly woe hereafter. And, oh! it is shame, self-loathing of the most intolerable kind, if not immediately, then finally, in the career of a sinner. So that sin is both guilt and suffering, and those who are associated with the sinner may share his suffering while exempt from his guilt, may share it and must, if they love him. Among all those partners of the sinner's woe our Redeemer stands first; nay, He inspires all others who share sinners' misery, gives them their motives as well as offers Himself as their model. As sinners are brazen and defiant, Jesus hangs His head and is ashamed; as they find in sin their dearest joy, so He is sorrowful "even unto death" for them. Our part is to appropriate His sorrow for our own sins, and then beg a share of it for the sins of others.

The Psalmist says to God: "Turn away Thy face from my sins" (Ps. l. 11), a prayer for the divine forgetfulness. If this turning away were done by the Father in disgust and in anger, and on account of His injured rights, then hell had come to me; His turning away would be the pain of loss. Now such a pain was what Jesus

suffered as far as it could be done by sympathy. Do you think that sympathetic suffering is less dreadful than properly personal suffering? Take two close friends, one a man of fine, and the other of gross, nature. The man of clay suffers the actual wound and is indeed miserable; the man of love only suffers by sympathy, and yet suffers the more acutely of the two. We often see this in a coarse man, sick and miserable, tended by a fine-natured wife more sick and miserable by sympathy. So with Jesus and me; He is my nobly constructed attendant in my downfall. He is far worse off on account of my guilt than I, even if I were in the deepest hell. Yet in the remote and now inaccessible part of His soul His consolation is laid up, that this, His sorrowful sympathy suffered by a motive of love, will yet be my motive of repentance.

CHAPTER IV.

The Contrition of Jesus.

And He began to fear and to be heavy, to grow sorrowful and to be sad. And He said to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death. And kneeling down He fell flat on the ground upon His face, and He said: Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee; remove this chalice from Me (Matt. xxvi. 37-39; Mark xiv. 33-36; Luke xxii. 42).

We behold Jesus entering on His final struggle quite forgetful of all else but His chosen task of redeeming us from sin and hell. He is full of reverential love for His adorable Father, full of sympathetic love for us as His well-loved brothers, having a sense of identity with us more real than ever before. And as sorrowful as death itself is His soul on our account; so this whole beginning of His passion might well be rightly called His sorrow or contrition in the Garden.

And our Redeemer's agony in the Garden is also called His prayer. One of the secrets of His wisdom is how to turn sorrow into prayer. Study Jesus and your most intense pain will turn into a prayer of whole-hearted resignation to the divine will. This is especially true if you are under strain of such mental agony as comes from the misery of false friends, or sudden disgrace, or tendency to despair. Therefore, as Jesus begins to be sorrowful, He begins to pray.

"And He said: Abba, Father"—a term of endearment added to the tender name of Father—dearest Father—"all things are possible to Thee; remove this chalice

from Me." How heart-rendering a plea for pity is this offered to our common Father by the "firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29).

How well does Jesus teach us how to begin to pray. Long ago He had said: "When you pray say thus: Our Father" (Matt. vi. 9). No word that God hears opens His heart to us like that—Our Father, Abba, Father, beloved Father! He responds instantly, for He says: "However wayward my child may be, he has not forgotten that I am his Father; he has forgotten to be a good son, but still remembers that I am a good Father."

And now Jesus, in the Garden, opening wide His soul and drawing every one into its all embracing charity, for us and in our stead, says: "Dearest Father, I have sinned before heaven and against Thee" (Luke xv. 21). I am sincerely penitent; grant me Thy merciful pardon.

But his Father did not answer; or rather He constrained His Son to earn, by a terrible delay and a fearful ordeal, a more generous response. For as Jesus prayed, heaven remained shut to Him as to a lost soul, dark and silent. O, worse; infinitely worse. For all at once hell was opened against Jesus. Then was fulfilled the prophetic word: "I am come into the depth of the sea, and a tempest has overwhelmed me" (Ps. lxxviii. 3). A whole ocean of horror poured into His soul from the caverns of despair. Innumerable demons were turned loose upon Him, to taunt Him, to insult Him, to maltreat Him in His innermost soul.

"He fell flat on the ground"—as if suddenly pierced with His enemies' arrows. It must have been a deadly stroke that could instantly lay low so strong a champion. But our champion was now in the thick of His foes, His

foes and ours, and entirely abandoned to their assaults. It was as if they had been lying in wait for Him, and now had suddenly rushed upon Him and threw Him down and trampled on Him. "I am a worm and no man" (Ps. xxi. 7), He had said of Himself in prophecy. Under men's feet is my place, flat on the earth which is the home of the race I love. And under not only men's but demons' feet was He instantly writhing, for He is experiencing the "sorrows of hell" (Ps. xvii. 6).

You will ask the reason for His suffering this torment. A glance at your own soul will help you to answer. What are the motives for your contrition when preparing to confess your sins? "The loss of heaven and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love"; such is our act of sorrow. These are identically the motives of Jesus. The Agony in the Garden is our Redeemer's act of contrition, it is the great ocean of contrition from which we fill our little souls to make an offering to our offended Father in order to obtain forgiveness. And He feels the "pains of hell" in our stead, so that we may never feel them in eternity.

No one ever suffered the fear of hell as Jesus did that night. This horror was made perfect, as we have seen, by the apparition of many demons. "Many fat bulls have besieged me; they have opened their mouths against me, as a lion ravening and roaring. . . . Many dogs have encompassed me" (Ps. xxi. 13-17). Christ, according to several commentators, saw devils in various terrible shapes surrounding Him and mocking Him as if He were a wicked and impenitent man fated to be damned. They insulted Him and defied Him, boasting

that at His crucifixion they and not He would triumph, that they would win men's allegiance better than He; that He was a failure, living and dying.

It was for our Redeemer's humiliation (and this means for our redemption) that the demons were allowed this freedom of profaning the sanctuary of His interior consciousness—and as players use a stage, so did they use His secret soul to mimic the foulest deeds of lust and drunkenness and murder, of sacrilege and blasphemy. They did all this without hindrance and with perfect realism of persons and scenes and words and even thoughts. Every foul wretch whom they paraded before His affrighted spirit was a man or woman whom He intensely loved, and whom, as they taunted Him, He had failed to save, or was to fail in the future. Can any one fancy a severer strain upon loyal affection? Could there be ministers of terror more capable than the devils? Could perfect chastity and obedience and brotherly love suffer greater woes than Jesus in the Garden?

Many other fierce enemies were afterwards to do their worst upon Him, and presently they would begin: Judas, Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, the mob of the Jews, and then the cruel soldiers. But all these had their masters both in the depth and ingenuity of malice, namely the demons of hell. These are the primeval sinners, proficient and preceptors among all the wicked. The pity of it is that they said true things to the writhing spirit of Jesus, and showed Him things all too true. They stabbed wounds into His sensitive nature, the like of which no mere mortal hater of God was capable of inflicting, and they were armed with the certain facts of our sins and our impenitence.

Why not reproach Him with the sins of His brother men, and then fiercely call on Him to disown forever the ignoble, sensual, rebellious, ungrateful race, and fling it off? Can they not prove that men out-vie the wickedness of the dark pit itself? Yet He never falters in His love for us. But our minds are baffled in striving to imagine how dreadfully He suffers by being faithful to us. He lets these, our arch-enemies, do their worst upon Him—oh, how much that means, the devil's worst. And He stands His ground for us. It is with this part of His agony in view that the prophet speaks for Him: "My soul is filled with evils; and My life hath drawn nigh to hell. I am counted among them that go down to the pit. . . . They have laid Me in the lower pit; in the dark places, and in the shadow of death. Thy wrath is strong over Me" (Ps. lxxxvii. 4-8).

The heart of Jesus, made as it was for the joys of heaven as no other heart could be, endures for our sakes the pains of hell. The most loathsome deeds were committed within His all-holy spirit in living pictures, and because they were done by souls He truly loved, and with whom He was inseparably associated as their brother and their Redeemer, these actions became to Him, in all their shamefulness, as it were, His own. At every turn and variation of this awful mental atonement, and as each malignant, or sensual, or murderous, or sacrilegious wretch was shown Him in full career of vice, the demons yelled to His amazed and shrinking soul: "Ecce Homo! Behold the man you love!" He seemed to be trampled on by the endless procession of the damned on their way to eternal loss; and as He abhorred them and loathed and feared them, He yet loved them tenderly.

Jews and Gentiles, Christians and pagans were there; the heathen races whom God loved so well, and who cast Him off for the sake of devil-worship; all their myriads marshaled by their demons burst into the Savior's inner sanctuary: "O God, the heathens are come into Thine inheritance; they have defiled Thy holy temple" (Ps. lxxviii. 1).

"Thus," says St. Leo, "He was despised in our degradation, saddened with our sadness, crucified with our pain." And yet the most powerful cause of His agony was His sensitiveness to His Father's honor, thus outraged by His children's wickedness. The soul of Christ saw our sins in God. His shame and grief were equal to the injury done the sovereign majesty of God; the ingratitude, callousness, relapse, contempt of divine warnings, indifference to the tender affection of His Father for us. He loved His Father as the infinite goodness. He loved us sinners, each one of us, as He loved Himself. He was jealous of His Father's sovereign rights; He was indescribably sensitive to our eternal interests. Between these two loves, each supreme in His soul, and each warring fiercely against the other, Jesus, as between the upper and nether millstones, was ground to powder.

Nothing that Jews or Romans were afterward to inflict on Him could equal His present pain; love was His fiercest, cruelest executioner. No created mind ever saw so clearly as Jesus what an evil and bitter thing it is to turn one's back on our heavenly Father; His mind was perfect and His knowledge of sin was perfect. No heart was ever so saddened by the sinner's fate as was Jesus' for every sinner; because, besides being so close a friend, so affectionate and disinterested a friend of the sinner,

He was the only-begotten Son of that God whom the sinner had so dreadfully injured.

With many of us contrition for sin is little better than an ordinary emotion, a passing emotion at that. And this is too often the case even in preparing to reckon with the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of penance. How different is Jesus' estimate of our sins, how different His sorrow for them. Of His soul's sorrow the prophet says: "Great as the sea is thy destruction, O thou daughter of Sion" (Lam. Jer. ii. 13). Let us appreciate that only after some such sorrow does an angelic comfort visit our spirits from on high—a sorrow taking in all our sins and vividly realizing every shade of their malice, a sorrow for God's sake and endeavoring to see our sins as God does—the ugly malice of our ingratitude, the persistent malice of evil habit, the ever-recurring malice of relapse, and always and everywhere the essential malice of rebellion against the divine majesty.

CHAPTER V.

Father, Remove this Chalice from Me.

And He prayed, that if it might be, the hour might pass from Him. And He said: Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee; remove this chalice from Me; but not what I will, but what Thou wilt (Mark xiv. 35, 36).

This word, chalice, or cup, Jesus had used more than once before. When the mother of the sons of Zebedee had spoken to Him of His Kingdom, and begged high places for her sons, He immediately thought of His passion, of this very royal feast of tears and sorrow. He said to them: "You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" (Matt. xx. 22).

His time had come; His bitter draught was at His lips and entering His soul. The vision of bad men and worse devils was thrust into His spirit like a poisonous drink forced down His throat, and hence the words cup and drink were chosen by Him to describe His agony.

"Let this chalice pass from Me." As if to say, I have tasted the bitterness of sin. One drop of such agony poisons My very soul. Let the rest pass away from Me, so that, in the awful bodily sufferings awaiting Me, My soul may be, if not serene and peaceful, yet not totally despondent.*

*This is an interpretation which we venture to think reasonable. A commoner one is that our Lord prayed to be exempted from this entire shameful ordeal.

The smallest particle of poisoned blood on the tip of a lancet is fatal to the surgeon's patient; the whole system is immediately infected, and by no more than the least touch of the sharp blade. One taste of our sinfulness poisoned the Redeemer's very soul—why be forced to drink the entire cup to the dregs?

Is not this enough? "O, my Father, let this cup pass away from Me." But His Father was inexorable, and held our Redeemer to His original purpose of superabundant satisfaction.

It all poured into Him like a burning stream of poison—these reproaches of the demons, their taunts about His failure to win and save, the awful pictures of the long ages of idolatry. His gloomy forecast of the multitudes who would know Him only to reject Him to the end of time—He drank one taste of it, and it stifled Him. It was enough; why should not His Father be content with this?

It was, of course, His human nature that made this piteous plea for relief. As to His divine nature, how far distant it must have seemed, that He should cry out: "Father, remove this chalice from Me." Yet this very weakness was in accordance with His plan for His whole passion, and it will be seen to the end that He shows Himself so entirely a man as to seem almost to forget that He is God. The farther from God the nearer to the sinner, was His motto.

Yet there is a mystery here. We cannot understand how Jesus could yield to fear, for this seems a defect, especially in one so closely joined to God. But fear is no defect in a man, if it be founded on truth, controlled by reason, and subordinated to the will of God. Jesus

was a man, and His fear was caused by contemplating the true fate of multitudes of His brethren. And was it unreasonable in Him to wish to stop half way to hell, and to beg His Father to call off the demons and the damned? No risk of our salvation was run by this entreaty, even if it had been granted; and as it was not granted, He suffered the extreme penalty anyway, and that very willingly. But meanwhile it gives us the deep comfort of finding Jesus nearer to an equality with us, while it leaves Him only the more truly our Redeemer.

More than human Jesus would not be in His passion, lest we should despair of imitating Him. And now He better elevates us to our highest point of fortitude in adversity, by His submission to the divine will after imploring relief in vain. In it all He shows how great the human heart can be when bearing the burden of others' guilt, informed with the noble motive of love of brethren, whether innocent or guilty.

Therefore, His prayer, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me," did not spring from inconstancy of mind, nor from timidity; but from humanity. It arose from His desire to partake of our natural dread of extreme misery. He wished to be like us, that we might more readily wish to be like Him, it being certain that this, His natural reluctance, would be followed by entire obedience. Here is a moving example to our weakness. "Our Lord," says one of the Fathers, "trembled with our fear, that He might take on Himself our weakness, and robe our weakness with His strength."

Nothing in our Redeemer's passion is more consoling than His shrinking from the ordeal of the Garden. He

is more our model thus than if He were a mere stoic. bidding defiance to every grief. When not only all human comfort is lacking, but heaven itself seems shut against me, then does His Agony in the Garden console me; especially when the torment comes from the remembrance of past sins, and instinctively finds expression in a prayer that sounds like repining. Finally, if Jesus had not flinched, we should not have known so well how hard our sins beset Him. It is a terror to us that our malignant weakness was a terror to Him, even to Jesus.

CHAPTER VI.

Thy Will Be Done.

He fell upon His face, praying, and saying: Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee; remove this chalice from Me; but not what I will, but what Thou wilt. . . . Again he went the second time and prayed, saying the same words: O, My Father, if this chalice cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done. . . . He went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. . . . And being in an agony He prayed the longer (Matt. xxvi. 39-44; Mark xiv. 36-39; Luke xxii. 41-43).

Jesus had always implicitly preferred His Father's will to His own, and often expressly: "I am come down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John vi. 37). At this supreme moment of treating with His Father about our salvation, He three times prayed for a release, or for a change in the penalties to be suffered. And each time He distinctly left the decision with His Father. A very conspicuous place is thus given to the virtue of obedience. Let the prayer of Jesus stand as our pattern. His submission to His Father's will is a striking example of loving conformity. For He had only to insist and His Father would yield immediately. He thus teaches us that when dealing with even a complacent superior it is better to obey than to insist.

"Not My will but Thine"; and on the instant the Redeemer saw, as it were, the very hand of His Father

pressing the loathsome cup against His trembling lips. For the Father's will was to visit justice upon His Son that He might the more perfectly dispense mercy to His Son's brethren—to us. Our Redeemer thus, in effect, said: Let justice be done upon men, and upon all men, and to the full measure—but only through and by My sufferings; let mercy be granted to men, because justice has been visited on Me. Upon Me, justice first and favor afterwards; upon them, mercy first and last and all the time for My sake. Thus He suffers for God and for us, securing justice to God and pardon to us. This terrible compact of infinite love with infinite justice Jesus ratified by the exercise of obedience, which is here shown to be a high virtue indeed.

His anxious soul emphasized this stern resolve by a three-fold repetition of His petition and of acceptance of its refusal, using "the self-same words." This agonized petition for a change in the original understanding (if the expression may be allowed) between Father and Son, together with the Son's thrice-offered submission, is our Redeemer's prayer in the Garden, distinctively, essentially so. And it was His last prayer there, for towards the end of the narrative we are told that "being in an agony He prayed the longer," ever and again uniting His purpose with His Father's, repeatedly opening the very depths of His saddened soul to the inpouring of His Father's purposes. Again and again His sorrow for our sins, and His determination to save us, forced Him to resume and continue the task of confronting the Sovereign Majesty with an adequate atonement, adequate not only to redeem us, but adequate to measure His love for us.

“And being in an agony He prayed the longer.” What a sorrow! How sad that one’s very prayers to heaven are one’s agony. For Jesus to make a way to God for us by His prayers He was first to pass through the agonies of death and hell. Our Redeemer could not help going to His Father, for he loved us and must save us; yet, burdened with us, he could not reach Him except by way of this overflowing bitterness of atonement.

Jesus’ last prayer in the Garden is the strongest one He ever made, except that on the cross; which, indeed, is the same as this: “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” And this is a summary of all His prayers, and it should be the essence of all ours. May my last prayer, O God, be that of Thy agonizing Son, absolute abandonment to Thy holy will. And may it be efficacious for my own soul and the souls of all for whom I shall offer up my death.

“And being in an agony He prayed the longer.” Commentators say that the evangelist here uses the word agony to indicate a pain like that of those who are at the last struggle with death. And so Jesus had said at the beginning of His prayer: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death.” My soul is smitten with a death wound; and as the body of a man so struck pours out his heart’s blood and dies, so My soul pours out prayers—prayers to the One who smote Me, My Father; prayers uttered in My death agony for those I love, My fellow-men. The word agony is surely most properly descriptive of the supreme pain of dying. Jesus endured that pain from the moment He entered the Garden till the end. So that the intensity of His fervor, as he prayed for us, was death-like.

Some of us give up praying when called on to suffer agony. But our Lord's example is the reverse of this, and teaches that in affliction of body or soul we should constrain ourselves to pray. No prayer is so fervent as that of the agonizing, whether living or dying; no prayer is so necessary, none so pleasing to God. And it is the "prayer of faith" (James v. 15); also of hope, for agony is darkness; one must pray in blind trust when all comfort is removed, or, as in Jesus' case, worse than removed. It is a prayer of disinterested love, for such is the prayer of pure faith and blind hope, saying, I know nothing of God but through my sorrows, and yet I praise Him; may His all-holy will be done. In such a soul the sense of God's sovereign goodness is stronger than the racking agony of pain, whether in mind or body.

CHAPTER VII.

Our Redeemer's Watchers.

And He taketh with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, and He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad, to fear and to be heavy. And He saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here and watch with Me. . . . And He cometh to His disciples and findeth them sleeping from sorrow. And He said to Peter: Simon, sleepest thou? What!* Could you not watch one hour with Me? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. . . . And He cometh again, and findeth them asleep, for their eyes were heavy, and they knew not what to answer Him. . . . Then when He rose up from prayer He cometh to His disciples the third time, and saith to them: Sleep ye now and take your rest. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt. xxvi. 36-45; Mark xiv. 33-41; Luke xxii. 45, 46).

“Stay you here and watch,” Jesus said to Peter, James and John. O Jesus, what a privilege, to watch whilst Thou dost suffer. And how uneven the division of the burden. Thou choosest to be sorrowful even unto death, and I am allotted only to stand guard. Thou choosest bitter agony for Thyself, and my only duty is to keep awake and be ready to listen to Thee and console Thee. Surely I will do my poor part. But they failed. The day will come when they will watch indeed, and arouse the whole world from slumber. But they are

*One evangelist gives this admonition in the singular as addressed to Peter, and another in the plural; but what Jesus said to one He meant for all of them.

as yet no better than types of that midway class of souls called the tepid, not bad enough to be traitors, not good enough to be friends. The tepid sleep from weariness and sadness, while nobler natures, after Jesus' pattern, are sleepless for the same reason.

Sorrow weighted down the faculties of the Apostles and made them sleep. Sorrow sharpened the faculties of our Redeemer. After what He experienced that night we might suppose that He would never sleep again. And such was God's will; His next sleep was to be that of death and the grave.

And the baser natures among men, those that are worse than tepid, watch from avarice, like Judas, and from hatred, like the chief priests. Judas was a model watcher; and the wakefulness of the traitor is in contrast with the sleepiness of the three faithful ones. He did not wait to be approached by his Master's enemies; he "went to the chief priests." Avarice is more zealous than friendship and is full of enterprise. Its votaries frequently open the way into unknown regions for even Christian missionaries. Judas watched and bargained and got his money while the faithful Apostles listened drowsily to the most moving discourses of their Master, before leaving the supper-room. And now the good ones sleep while the bad one watches. Zeal for money, zeal for God, the whole world knows which of these watches best, labors hardest, and wins its prizes most surely.

Watch with Me, He said. For I would have you to witness My sorrow and comfort Me in it. And, oh, I need your company; be ready when I call. A word from you, My beloved ones, will save Me, perhaps, from death, from which I am separated but by a hair's breadth, so

sharp is My pain of heart. Wait here while I go yonder and pray in the very agony of death. Angels I can have for the asking, but your company is sweeter to Me than theirs, for I am a man and not an angel. Especially now in My extremity I need human comfort. Watch and wait till I shall call you. May I not depend on you? But when He came to them He found them fast asleep. He had to wake them up. He could but reproach them: "What! Could you not watch one hour with me?"

As if to say, The sentinels of the Roman garrison watch this night with sleepless vigilance. And you?—you are my sentinels, and as I posted you I said: "Stay you here and watch." If you had been Pilate's soldiers instead of My Apostles you would have been put to death for sleeping on guard. And doubtless Jesus would add that all the time they slept Judas watched sleeplessly.

Instead of consoling Him they but added another drop of bitterness to His cup. He chided them. And yet He excused them: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Jesus readily palliates and excuses. But He felt their fault deeply. He did not ask the comfort of angels, and yet one came to Him. He did beg the sympathy of men, and they were too slow of heart to so much as understand what He meant.

His failure with His disciples teaches me not to rely upon human comfort even when I have every right to expect it. Just as His failure to obtain relief from His Father admonishes me, that even infinite goodness sometimes rejects an agonized prayer for solace, exacting immediate, unreasoned, and yet most reasonable submission, demanding a blind trust in a goodness not seen nor felt and only known by faith. He gave them, as was His

custom, a lesson drawn from the circumstances of their position: "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." That is to say: If even sympathy for My painful watching will not make you watch, then let self-interest do so. Temptation wins mostly by surprise, and it will catch you in an unguarded moment. And, indeed, our Redeemer guarded them vigilantly whilst they watched drowsily for Him.

To value sympathy is a trait of fine natures, who crave affection when in distress. But this involves a keen sensibility to unkindness, or even to forgetfulness of the offices of friendship, on the part of those deeply loved. The case is worse when one has a sacred right to consolation on account of near kinship or great favors bestowed. Jesus suffered an overfull share of this pain. He was denied the sympathy of those whose comfort was His only human solace. Later on He must sever Himself totally from them to save them from showing that they were scandalized in Him.

And what He now suffered in this respect was but preliminary to further and greater pain of the same kind, betrayed by one Apostle, denied by another, and he the head of His Church; falsely accused, and finally condemned and hounded to death by the priests whose office He so deeply revered; finally to be the victim of so rare a sin as Roman cowardice. The sleepiness of His friends had a real place in these His greater sorrows, precisely because they were His friends, and the only ones at hand to console Him in His hour of doom. Always desirous of tokens of their affection, He was especially so now, when He was giving His very life for them.

We may suppose that "Watch and pray, lest ye enter

into temptation," were His last words of warning. Alas! if Peter had but heeded this warning. Jesus knew their frailty, and the awful events impending which would display it. His counsel to them now, as before in the supper-room, was self-distrust, caution, watchfulness and prayer. Peter's resource was vaunting his loyalty and boasting of his bravery, ending with a frantic blow with a sword—and a thrice repeated denial of His Apostleship.

The sacred narrative tells us that: "They knew not what to answer Him." Poor men. They were puzzled; they did not know what to say or think, and they were worn out, and oppressed with sleepiness. Yet it would seem that even these most unsatisfactory interviews somewhat relieved the mind of Jesus, since He sought them three different times during His Agony. Infinitely preferable, indeed, was the company of His poor sleepy disciples, wayward Peter and stupid James and John, to the company He left in seeking them—the damned with their wails of despair and the demons with their reproaches.

CHAPTER VIII.

Jesus is Comforted by an Angel.

“And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven comforting Him” (Luke xxii. 43).

While the angel's visit soothed our Redeemer, He was distressed, as we have seen, that a being of another race, rather than one of his own, should comfort Him in His Agony, which was human sorrow and not angelic.

He was indeed King of the angels, being the express “image of the invisible God, and the firstborn of every creature” (Col. i. 15). Yet as a man He revered them as His Father's messengers. But they were not men, and He loved men incomparably more than angels. Men of all sorts and grades were His best beloved, as being of His own proper family. When we speak of “the human family” we use the term figuratively to express the unity of our race. That was no figure of speech to Jesus, for our common nature was His own particular nature in an indescribable unity of existence with each of us, and of love. What an affectionate man feels for His own brothers and sisters our Redeemer felt for every man and woman that ever lived. Each one of us, good and bad, was His own blood-kinsman; the whole race was literally His family, more so by far than the angels were.

Many sinful generations had broken up this family of Jesus into most diverse races, divided more by hatred than even by language and customs. In Jesus all men and races yet remained one close brotherhood. He had come to heal all divisions among men forever, and men

not angels were to be His foremost instruments in this work of love.

Of the new race His mother is the second Eve, and she is not an angel, though the Queen of angels; He is Himself our new Adam, in whom all that was lost by the first Adam is to be restored (I. Cor. xv. 22), a God-Man, not a God-angel. "To which of the angels did (His Father) say, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?" (Heb. i. 5).

In that hour, therefore, the highest angel could not vie with the meanest child of Adam as a comforter of Jesus. Never did He feel so much a man as when He began to sink deeper into man's wickedness and woes. Here, then, was a new sorrow disguised even in His comfort. For not only did He crave comfort direct from His Father and yet must be content with an angel's instead, but next to His Father's, He craved sympathy from His own kind, His own flesh and blood, His chosen men, and an utterly different comforter was given Him—the while that the Apostles slept and waited, their minds all mystified, even their hearts incredulous. Yet, notwithstanding all this, the angel's coming was a gracious boon from His Father.

For now there suddenly burst upon Jesus a vision of blessed peace. The devils are gone; hell has again swallowed up, if only for a breathing spell, the devils and the damned, who have been tormenting Him. Oh, what a difference—this gentle being, and just as strong as gentle, full of brightness and affection, all beaming with hope and peace, reverence and sympathy. How sweet a visit, how welcome a comfort. Hope rose in His heart, though we hardly dare say joy. How greedily

the Lord drank in the angel's eager words, soothing the burnt path of the fiery draught He had just drunk—words from heaven direct. If we would speak of perfect kindness, we call it angelic; or perfect peace, we call it heavenly. Thus heaven vouchsafed to Jesus an interval, however brief, of its own gentle kindness, deep peace and rest.

And this comforts us, too; for at last the Lord is assisted by a creature's sympathy. And although he be a sinless angel and of another race, an unredeemed because a sinless race, yet he is not far removed from us, for we are made "a little less than the angels" (Ps. viii. 6). In honoring Jesus the angel honors us, for Jesus is of our race, Jesus to whom this mighty spirit bows down his face and pays his unspeakably full allegiance; an angel, whose proud boast it is to keep watch and ward over men and whose purest joy is their repentance (Luke xv. 10).

It is true that the angel's office was not to draw out the poisoned arrow of our sinfulness, whose iron, thrust even into His soul, was yet to fester there with awful horror and dread and disgust. That agony of soul was to leave Him only when His Father drew it forth with His life. But the angel could say things of the Father's love which would for a moment deaden our Redeemer's pain, and he could pour in the balm of kind words of pity and of hope. He must have had a mighty power of pity, this angel, to undertake such a task and to succeed in it—a resistless eloquence of compassion was this angel's peculiar endowment among his fellow-angels.

Did the angel appear to our Lord as a man? It is thought so, since it was human comfort the Lord craved most next to that of His Father, which was denied Him

first and last. What did the angel say to Him? Doubtless he bade Him drink deeper of the bitterness of our sins; and he praised his courage; he "strengthened Him," as one translation reads. The angel must have exalted to our Lord His office of Redeemer. And did he remind Him of His coming resurrection? We can hardly think otherwise, for to think of that was not lessening merit while it strengthened courage; it would not stop Judas, nor relieve the dread pressure of our sins upon His soul. And the heavenly messenger doubtless praised the noble virtue of suffering for one's beloved, the heroism of dying to save an enemy. He exalted the beauty of fortitude in so glorious a cause as men's eternal welfare. Our Redeemer received at least a passing comfort from this most affectionate and reverent herald of celestial peace. He merited our eternal thanks for comforting our champion in the direst moment of His awful conflict.

But yet, what permanent comfort could an angel be to one who, having been familiar habitually with the very Father of all consolation, now feels Him withdrawn and departed from Him!

How could the mind of Christ be illumined by one who had been himself a lowly pupil of the Son of God in heaven? How could Jesus, Himself the strength of earth and heaven, be stayed up in His utter prostration of spirit by any created nature except for a short moment of rest? What could any angel say that Christ did not already know better a thousand times?

He knew that the only comfort possible for Him was within the gift of men alone, that is to say, their willingness to suffer with Him. But when the angel was done, and before he vanished away, our saddened Redeemer

thanked Him lovingly, very grateful for His affectionate ministry.

Meanwhile, how deep the awe of the angel. How profound from that hour his reverence for our human nature, which, in his divine Master, he saw forming one person with the deity itself, and which he knew, even in the lowest grade of humanity, was being ransomed at such a price. There is much joy in an angel's office of helping sinners to repentance. What joy, then, is this angel's, since the foremost penitent of the whole race is here, the one whose contrition is the fountain source of every penitent's saving grief; and it is his unique privilege to attend Him and console Him.

It would seem that the angel's visit to Jesus took place only when his agony was very near its close; it was the last incident of his stay in the Garden immediately preceding his final prayer of agony. Except the kindly greeting of the Jewish women during the way of the cross, and the unrecorded words of compassion of His mother beneath the cross, Jesus was now to hear no other syllable of pity till all the heavenly host should greet His soul liberated by death. When His enemies spit in His face and mocked and struck Him and blasphemed Him, there was no angel sent to strengthen Him; nor all the time men were wrangling over Him, Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod, the mob; nor when they nailed Him to the cross; nor when He felt the throes of death coming upon His mortal frame amid the desolation of His soul; He had barred out all help from heaven. Standing before Judas and his company, reaching out His hands for their gyves, we shall hear Him distinctly renounce the aid of the uncounted legions of His Father's heavenly army.

CHAPTER IX.

Jesus Sweats Blood.

And His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground (Luke xxii. 44).

It must have been at or near the end of our Lord's agony that He sweat blood, or rather became aware that the drops that fell from His face to the ground were the life drops of His Sacred Heart. He thus shed the first blood of His passion in an olive garden. The olive tree is an emblem of peace; its roots were that night watered by the bloody sweat of the Prince of Peace (Isaias ix. 6).

This was, indeed, a prodigy, but one as much due, perhaps, to natural grief as to miraculous interposition; for the like of it is well known to physicians, who tell us of intense bereavement or other nervous strain turning a man's hair gray in a single night, and it is further possible that this oozing of His blood from his overcharged veins may have saved our Redeemer from death then and there.

What were His feelings when, as he wiped His dripping face, He felt the strange thickness of His sweat, and then getting the moonbeams upon His hand, He saw that He was sweating blood? Instantly He must have offered it to His Father, raising His eyes to heaven and saying: Father, behold the witness of My entire obedience to thee, and of My devoted love for Thy children and My brethren.

Nor did His bloody sweat greatly surprise Him. It was the proper bodily symptom of His intense and inner pain. It did not shock Him either; it was the first bloodshed of our redemption, the earnest money of our ransom. His was a generous heart, and the more precious the gift He could give, the better He was pleased. He was glad that before He was struck by hand of man He bled for man's salvation, struck by the hand of God. His Father claimed the privilege of first shedding the blood of His Son's passion, as at the Circumcision the same Father had claimed the first fruits of His son's life in the cutting of His infant flesh. And Jesus was also pleased that He could bleed for us while yet wholly free. At the very end He will bleed for us again after His soul has regained its freedom, after His release by death from the torment of the cross; the soldier's spear will cut open and drain dry His heart all still in death.

Therefore, when He saw that He had begun to shed His blood He was glad. My Father cannot resist My blood, He must have said. And the self-same words will come from His heart at every subsequent blood shedding: Father, thou canst not resist Thy Son's blood.

What better token of sincerity than blood? The Apostle reproaches his boastful converts that they had not yet resisted unto blood (Heb. xii. 4). Blood speaks louder than words, whether in exhortation to brethren or petition to their angry Father for their pardon.

But let us revert to the cause of this heart-witness, namely, His grief and shame for our sins. What happens to you when you are caught in a shameful deed? The blood rushes to your face. The very same happened to Jesus, when, on entering the Garden, He found Himself

suddenly accused of our shameful sins and unable to deny them; only His blush of shame was so impetuous and struck so vehemently against its outer barriers of arteries and veins that it gradually overcame them; His blushing for our sins was bleeding for them.

Doubtless during His agony Jesus wept many tears. But the most proper tears for the Redeemer of this fallen race are tears of blood, dropping from every pore, and "trickling down upon the ground." Surely, too, as He sweat blood, His eyes wept tears which mingled with His bloody sweat. Let me listen to Him sobbing and naming my name amid His sobs. Let me touch His drooping face and feel the clammy drops of my Savior's blood.

There are those who can hardly bear to hear a child sob, though they know that children weep and laugh the same minute. But let me hear a message from Jesus in His literally heart-breaking sobs, and let me listen to my own name gasped meanwhile in His petitions to the Father for my forgiveness.

When Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus the Jews said: "Behold how He loved him" (John xi. 36). And from the beginning of the world tears have proved a friend's love better than the tenderest words, or gifts of gold—but not better than the shedding of blood. So the angel might point towards that figure bent in sorrow, weeping and bleeding, and say to me: Behold how He loved thee.

CHAPTER X.

The End of the Agony in the Garden.

And He cometh to his disciples and He findeth them sleeping for sorrow. . . . And He said: Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak. . . . And they knew not what to answer Him. . . . Then, when He rose up from prayer, He cometh to His disciples the third time, and saith to them: Sleep ye now and take your rest. It is enough, the hour is come; behold the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. Behold he that will betray Me is at hand (Matt. xxvi. 40, 46; Mark xiv. 37, 42).

Our Redeemer is now returned, and finally, to His three drowsy watchers. Before this He had said of them: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," as if He were apologizing to His own wounded feelings for their weakness. Was it a weakness of faith? No; for it was not of the spirit, but of the flesh, yet a weakness of flesh that closely touched the spirit and deadened its courage.

"Sleep ye now, and take your rest," He said at last. St. Chrysostom supposes that this was said by way of reproof and in gentle irony. Others, like St. Augustine, surmise that He spoke plainly, affectionately, granting them a little longer sleep. This was doubtless after the whole company of the Apostles were united together. And, if this supposition be the true one, while they all

slept He watched, waiting for the coming of Judas and his band of soldiers.

This supposition gives our Redeemer a little time for reflection. And He feels that one period of His passion is now done, and that a most important one. There are hours of pain whose minutes are years. When His agony was over He felt as if He were at the end of a long life, a life of sin, and that He had died impenitent; sinful living and impenitent dying and eternal retribution had occupied Him wholly.

There is little doubt but that the sufferings of Jesus in the Garden were the most painful of His whole passion. This is seen from the nature of the case, they being more interior than any others; and it is shown also by His thrice repeated plea to His Father for relief, the like of which did not afterwards occur; and the marvelous symptom of His bloody sweat. The worst is over, we might think that He said to Himself, with a deep sigh of relief. And we might suppose that when He exclaimed: "Let us go hence!" He led His Apostles forth with thanksgiving to God that He was leaving that dismal scene of His mental anguish, glad to exchange it even for the embrace of Judas Iscariot. But, alas! the worst was not over. The worst was certainly what He suffered in the Garden. But it was to continue right on through His entire passion. The sorrow of the Garden was not all His sorrow unto death—"My soul is sorrowful even unto death"—but it was His chief sorrow until death, being the dull undertone of every pain He suffered. This is shown at the very end. For His complaint in the Garden—"O, My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from me"—did He not renew it again on the cross

when he exclaimed: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Besides arousing our deepest feelings of sympathy, adoration and gratitude, many lessons are learned by study of the Agony in the Garden. A principal one is, how noble it is to suffer for others, even the most unworthy, nay, one's deadliest enemies. From earliest childhood I have resented being blamed for the faults of others. Not so Christ; it was His very dearest choice to suffer for others, even the most undeserving, and He would have all His disciples imitate Him in this, and be glad of being blamed for the faults of others. What once stung me with a sense of injustice must now be welcomed as a favor. "Things that aforetime my soul refused to touch are now through anguish become my needful meat" (Job vi. 7), might our Lord have said in the Garden, and we must say the same in many a case of daily life. Either to suffer for the sins of others by being blamed and punished for them, or to feel the pangs of interior hunger and thirst in a desire to save souls in that painful way—such is the only alternative left to a really fervent disciple of Christ, after meditating on the Agony in the Garden.

A beautiful and most welcome teaching of the Agony is that suffering for others in a Christian spirit makes us love them with increased devotedness. Among men generally the more one man suffers on account of another man, the more he hates him. But with Christians all suffering is an offering of love, and love is greatly augmented by it. "A woman, when she is in labor, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the

anguish for joy that a man is born into the world" (John xvi. 21). A mother's joy is the joy of gratified love. She measures her child's love-worthiness by what she suffered for him, day and night, from first to last, in bearing him, at his birth, and later on in her many sorrows during his childhood and youth. The memory of her pains feeds her maternal love, and the same is to be said of every other love. Love grows rich in joy by bartering pleasure for pain. So our blessed Savior loves me immeasurably more on account of that pain I cost Him in the Garden and on the Cross than if He redeemed me painlessly. I in my turn will love others more and have more joy in them in proportion to what I suffer for them in His spirit and after His example.

We learn, too, that submission to the divine will in painful things is quite consistent with a loving protest against suffering them; and, also, that entire obedience to superiors may follow candid expostulation.

Furthermore, trust in God's loving care is most powerfully taught by the Agony in the Garden, even when appearances indicate His total forgetfulness of our needs or even of our fate; for nothing marks one for a true disciple of Christ more plainly than perseverance in prayer amid, and even in proportion to, the intolerable feeling of abandonment by the One to whom we pray—for "Being in an agony, He prayed the longer."

One of the truest tests of wisdom is in distinguishing between the greater and lesser in the mingling of spiritual forces. Our Savior's passion, and especially His Agony, teaches us that the main force in every work of religion, interior or exterior, is what is variously called fortitude, endurance, patience. "The patient man is better than the

valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit better than he that taketh cities" (Prov. xvi. 32). Jesus won our victory by standing His ground against our enemies rather than by assaulting and carrying their citadel by aggressive methods of spiritual warfare. These, to be sure, have their place; but, taking our whole life together, the first place must be awarded to patient waiting on the delays of God and patient endurance of the mistreatment of men.

We have already spoken of the superabundance of our Redeemer's sufferings, as shown in the Agony in the Garden, and this is a lesson worthy of further thought, for it corrects a grudging spirit in the service of God and our neighbor. His excess of suffering is an admonition to not a few, who confine their service to what the law demands, and are forever balancing obedience and penalties in their minds—show me a penalty or I will not obey, they seem constantly to say. Let us learn from Jesus that love, when it is real, has no exact measure, and that a true allegiance resents the very suggestion of penalties as a motive of conduct. Love by measure would be duty, or justice, not love, or at best a lower form of it. Our Savior's atonement is an ocean of the superfluity of love.

Consider that one tear of sorrow from a God-Man would have been enough to save us all, and more than enough. Then consider His many tears and His deadly sorrow and His bloody sweat and His utter abandonment to the fury of His enemies—His whole passion and death; consider all this, and if you are a lukewarm Christian, a minimizer of toil and suffering for the honor of God and the good of souls, you will be put to shame. Here then is the Lord's pattern of a zealous priest, parent, brother, friend. One tear of His would have given me everlasting

bliss; yet He gave me entire immolation of all joy of soul and all ease of body.

And these lessons are, every one of them, of a very practical nature. For the Agony is the archetype of the sacrament of penance, the most matter of fact of all our Redeemer's institutions. In the Garden we study confession, contrition and satisfaction under our divine Master Himself. He confesses His sins—which are ours made His by His love—after a perfect examination of conscience, that is to say, of all human wickedness, resulting in an exact knowledge of it. His confession is so true and so full of confusion as to bring a blush of actual bloodshedding shame upon His face and form. His contrition embraces every one's guilt, and is inspired by every grade of motive, from the dull heaviness of fear—"He began to fear and to be heavy"—to the very agony of horror at the injury done to the divine majesty, so infinitely good. He will accept the penance imposed by His Father, and faithfully perform it, by enduring all the misery that now shall happen to Him, from the moment He freely says: "I am He" to those who seek His life, till He exclaims: "It is finished," and expires on the cross. Confession, contrition and satisfaction are here all properly patterned. And as the main element of hope in the sacrament of penance is the sinner's interior sentiment of sorrow, so the Agony in the Garden, our Savior's contrition, his mental oblation to an offended deity, is the essential reason of our salvation, though it is yet to be perfected by His death on the cross.

All this is a reproach to not a few Christians. Their use of the sacrament of penance, the holy rite most closely allied to the Agony in the Garden, as well as the main

channel of His most precious blood, is too often more a formality of external observance than an interior self-arraignment under the eye of an offended God.

And presently Jesus will leave the Garden of Olives, and will enter on another stage of His office of Redeemer. His heart is still full of dread; and yet it is burning with eagerness, for He knows now as never before what a doom His death will save us from. In this spirit it is, one of mingled fear and fortitude, that He awakens His Apostles and leaves the scene of His heroic striving of spirit, saying: "Arise, let us go hence; he that will betray Me is at hand."

PART II.

JESUS IN THE POWER OF THE HIGH PRIESTS.

CHAPTER I.

Jesus Goes to Meet His Enemies.

And Jesus cometh to His disciples and saith to them: It is enough, the hour is come; behold the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. Behold, he that will betray Me is at hand. And Judas also, who betrayed Him, knew the place; because Jesus had often resorted thither together with His disciples. Judas, therefore, having received a band of soldiers and servants from the chief priests and the Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons; and he . . . went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him. He had given them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He; lay hold on Him and lead Him away carefully. And when he was come, immediately going up to Him, he saith: Hail, Rabbi! and he kissed Him. And Jesus said to him: Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forward and said to them: Whom seek ye? They answered Him: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith to them: I am He. And Judas also who betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said to them: I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Again, therefore, He asked them: Whom seek ye? And they said: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered: I have told you that I am He. If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way; that the word might be fulfilled which He said: Of them whom Thou hast given Me, I have not lost any one. And they that were about Him, seeing what would follow, said to Him: Lord,

shall we strike with the sword? Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And the name of the servant was Malchus. But Jesus, answering, said: Suffer ye thus far. And when He had touched his ear, He healed him. Then Jesus said to Peter: Put up again thy sword into the scabbard; for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father, and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of angels? How then shall the scripture be fulfilled, that so it must be done? The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? And Jesus said to the chief priests and magistrates of the temple, and the ancients and the multitude that was come unto Him: Are you come out as it were against a robber, with swords and clubs, to apprehend Me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and you laid not hands on Me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. Now all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then His disciples leaving Him, all fled away. Then the band and the tribune and the servants of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him. And a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body, and they laid hold on him. But he, casting off the linen cloth, fled from them naked (Matt. xxvi. 45-56; Mark xiv. 41-52; Luke xxii. 47-54; John xviii. 2-12).

There is an air of hurry in our Redeemer's manner as He passes from His Agony in the Garden to His Agony among His enemies: "It is enough, the hour is come"; "Rise up, let us go; behold he that will betray Me is at hand." It is the eagerness of our lover hastening to His appointment with us. One not knowing Jesus might have looked for another sort of eagerness: He is at hand that will betray Me, come and behold Me smite him with a thunderbolt. No, no; but the very contrary: I will receive him affectionately; I will accept his kiss of falsehood, and return it with one of true love; I will even make a last desperate effort to win him back to Me.

Even so, I must die; I must die by his treason, even if he repent. But I will die with far greater willingness if I can but save the man who betrays Me to death.

It was not to be. Jesus forboded that He would fail to save Judas. Had He not called Judas the son of perdition? (John xvii. 12). Yet He would not give him up. And He will now use, for the final struggle of divine love against love of money, not threats of vengeance, but the higher motives; for our Savior knew that the very worst enemies of God usually are moved by appeals to love or not at all. The highest motives of repentance are expressed by the touching word—friend; it was uttered by Jesus as affectionately as it was reproachfully, in the very ear of Judas. And, indeed, if Jesus Himself—speaking literally face to face with him and embracing him in unfeigned desire to pardon him and receive him back—cannot move Judas, what threat of punishment, present or future, can succeed?

Some such thoughts filled the heart of Jesus as He went to meet the traitor. How unworthy was the object of them. "Judas went before them, and drew nigh to Jesus to kiss him." Jesus is dreaming of softening and winning the spy who is guiding His enemies, an apostate disciple now become the sole dependence of the conspirators for accomplishing the death of their victim. The spy on his part is saying to his new-found associates: "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He; lay hold on Him and lead Him away carefully."

They must have insisted that Judas would point his Master out very plainly, for they had only the uncertain light of the moon, and Jesus was not notably different in dress from His Apostles. The kiss, therefore, was the

best means of identifying Jesus. And it would serve another purpose: it would deceive the Apostles, whom Judas had reason to fear; from Jesus he dreaded no resistance. The kiss is the safest token for the traitor and the deadliest for Christ. The coming of Judas is the approach of murder clothed in a kiss. Could treason choose a more fitting garb?

And yet to our Redeemer it opened a door of hope for the repentance of Judas and his reconciliation. As if to say: If I could once have him in My arms and kiss him affectionately, I might win him yet. The fact of Judas kissing Him in treachery would not hinder but help His holy plan; to the caress of affection it would add the sting of reproach. Therefore, as Judas came up and placed his arms over Jesus' shoulders and kissed him, our Redeemer said to him—right in his very ear, the very moment of returning his false kiss: "Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

There cannot be the faintest doubt but that Christ's distress at the misfortune of Judas overcame all sense of justice aroused by his awful guilt. Jesus did not hate that arch-traitor—no; He loved him and kissed him and called him friend, and, in the act of receiving his death-blow from him, He whispered in his ear an affectionate remonstrance, a tender invitation to renewal of friendship, even though it was too late to undo the effects of the awful crime: "Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Words of everlasting import! Scene of amazing love!

We read of the saints overcoming their natural repugnance to human misery so far as to kiss and lick and suck

the fetid ulcers of a dying pauper. None of them ever did the like of Jesus in putting His lips to those of Judas Iscariot. Think of the lips of Jesus pressed to the lips of Judas!—and most affectionately, pleadingly done.

It is probable, too, that if Jesus had acted otherwise, had flung Judas back and exclaimed traitor! instead of receiving and returning his embrace, then would Peter, instead of striking Malchus, have thrust his sword into the traitor's heart. Jesus, by returning Judas' kiss, saved him from death at the Apostle's hand, He healed the ear of Malchus, He saved the Apostles themselves from arrest and perhaps death—but he could not win back His perverted Apostle; no, not even with a kiss.

Then a strange thing happened. Our Savior would not be marked out and arrested by means of the spy's kiss. He miraculously held the soldiers off and struck them to the ground by an invisible force—not by His Father's angels, whose aid he expressly renounced, least of all by swords and strife; but He flung the guard backward by a secret stroke. Be it remembered, too, that the guard was a large one, equivalent to a regiment of a thousand men, being led by a military tribune.

Having thus shown His liberty, Jesus in his own time and way permitted His arrest. They did not, they were not allowed to recognize Him by the foul misuse of friendship's dearest token, a kiss. For after the kiss of Judas, and after the Lord had asked the soldiers, "Whom seek ye?" they did not answer, "We seek Thee," as they would have done had they been able to fix His identity by the sign agreed upon. But they answered, "We seek Jesus of Nazareth." They then identified Him by His own words: "I am He." How jealous He is of His

liberty, and how generous in the use of it. He will have every particle of the merit of His sacrifice, that He may have the more to offer to His Father for our salvation.

Another assertion of His liberty was this: He reproached His assailants that they had come to take Him and kill Him as if He were a common robber. Why had they not arrested Him any day of the past fortnight, as He was back and forth among them in the city? It was because that time was His own, and they were powerless in it. Now he says: "This is your hour and the power of darkness," and only because He so willed it. It was wholly by His permission that they and the rulers of the realms of darkness could gain possession of Him.

From first to last of His passion He might have extricated Himself at any time. He would not do so; He preferred to suffer all with entire willingness. He could have escaped by flight, knowing well the purpose of His enemies, the time and place they had set for seizing him. He deliberately refused to do so. He could have saved Himself by His power; yet, after throwing His enemies backward upon the ground, He awaited their recovery and then their arrest of Him. By rescue; twelve legions and more of angels impatiently awaited His signal. He never gave it. By persuasion; for, although Judas resisted Him, He would certainly have won some of the others and have divided and so baffled His enemies, for the very dead in their graves are moved by His words. On the contrary, He will not obstruct the Father's will by over-persuading His enemies, and His pleading before the chief priests and Pilate will lessen instead of increase His chances of acquittal. No; neither flight, nor force, nor eloquence, nor anything but submission to the will

of His Father, subjecting all majesty of power to the sovereign sweetness of love, shall now rule Him for our salvation. "The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

Let me remember that in resisting evil disposed men, even the most awful criminals, Jesus distinctly prefers the arms of meekness to the swords of the Apostles and the thunderbolts of His Father's angels. And this, He teaches me, is how the scriptures may be fulfilled. This doctrine is, or it ought to be, the very inspiration of my warfare against sinners. And it still holds true when the opposing of gentle love to malicious hatred is likely or even certain to fail. The example of Jesus at His arrest is the very dogma of patient submission to enemies. Judas slays his victim with a token of love, says St. Ambrose; and, adds the holy doctor, Jesus kisses him in return to soften his heart and pierce it with the pain of repentance. Jesus had long since taught me by words: "I say to you, love your enemies" (Matt. v. 43). And now by word and deed He teaches me to love steadfastly my very Judases, to address them kindly, to treat them in every way and under all circumstances as friends, even in the very act of their betraying me to the most shameful of deaths.

CHAPTER II.

Shall We Strike With the Sword?

Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forward and said to them: Whom seek ye? They answered Him: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith to them: I am He. . . . They went backward and fell to the ground. Again, therefore, He asked them: Whom seek ye? And they said: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered: I have told you that I am He; if, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way. . . . Then they that were about Him, seeing what would follow, said to Him: Lord, shall we strike with the sword? Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and struck the servant of the High Priest, and cut off his right ear. And the name of the servant was Malchus. But Jesus, answering, said: Suffer ye thus far. And when He had touched his ear He healed him. Then Jesus said to Peter: Put up again thy sword into the scabbard. For all that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father, and he will give Me presently more than twelve legions of angels? How then shall the Scripture be fulfilled, that so it must be done? The chalice which My Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? And Jesus said to the chief priests and magistrates of the temple, and the ancients and the multitude. . . . This is your hour and the power of darkness. . . . Then His disciples leaving Him, all fled away. . . . Then the band and the tribune and the servants of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him (Matt. xxvi. 51-56; Mark xiv. 46-50; Luke xxii. 49-54; John xviii. 4-12).

There was an unvarying conflict of zeal between Jesus and His enemies; they to punish Him and to destroy Him from the face of the earth, He to be punished and to be destroyed. Of the two, His zeal was the more eager and

determined; theirs was turbulent, headlong, even delirious. Their motives were various forms of envy and hate; His simply one: "The chalice which My Father hath given Me to drink, shall I not drink it?" namely, the Father's will to save us by His Son's passion and death. In that spirit Jesus pressed onward to His fate.

After the brief colloquy between Jesus and the traitor, the Apostles could no longer restrain their ardor. Peter called out to his Master, "Shall we strike with the sword?" Let it be said in the Apostles' favor, that if they failed as watchers they were ready to fight as the Lord's soldiers. But yet not under His obedience; for they were not willing even to wait for His answer—they doubtless foreboded a refusal. Knowing His peaceful disposition, Peter, even as he asked his question, drew his sword and began to strike.

Jesus stopped him immediately: "Put up again thy sword into the scabbard." And then—how very calm He was amid all this boiling passion—He went to Malchus, whom Peter had wounded, and He healed his ear. The sword, he plainly teaches, is not our weapon, but theirs whose work is born of brute force and perishes with it: "All that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Physical force is the appropriate weapon rather of error than of truth. The lovers of darkness love also the sword; the children of light should hate the sword. We have, indeed, a sword, the two-edged sword of the spirit (Heb. iv. 12); one edge of it is the word of God; and patient suffering is the other.

It often happens that the man most vehement in action is the most timid in suffering, as was the case with Peter. And yet it is by suffering and not by action that

God was pleased to save us. It follows that over much action seriously mars the work of Christ, and sometimes totally undoes it, zealots perishing with the sword of overheated zeal which they have recklessly substituted for Christian patience—calm endeavor.

And Jesus insisted: "Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of angels?" The Apostles counted on human help, and their Master's mind was preoccupied with heavenly defence, though set upon refusing even that. No—as if to say—not angels nor men must save Me now; angels I reject and men I cannot have. But if men fail Me now they will not fail Me afterwards, and they will yet rival and surpass the angels themselves, both in love of Me and in heroic defence of Me.

Peter had struck to kill, for he aimed at Malchus' head, who was doubtless the boldest of the officials. The darkness, the excitement, the fisherman's awkwardness, and, as some suppose, our Redeemer's merciful guidance of the blow, saved the man's life. And then the Lord healed his severed ear. Was it not a gracious act?

It is not often that we rebuke evil men by healing the wounds they deservedly suffer. Yet it was not by wounding others, but by healing their wounds, and especially by suffering wounds Himself, that Christ would conquer, "by whose stripes we are healed" (I. Peter ii. 24). St. Ambrose says: "He who wished to save all by His own wounds wished not to be saved by the wounding of His persecutors."

And then Jesus turned again to His Apostles and said: "Suffer ye thus far." That is to say, allow them to arrest Me, for—now turning to the Jews—"this is your

hour and the power of darkness." His meaning is that the Apostles and their Master could not play different parts. It would be hypocrisy in Him to allow Himself to be apprehended, nay to meet and accept arrest, while, on the contrary, He allowed them to fight for a rescue, which, indeed, was, humanly speaking, impossible. There can be little doubt but that Peter's blow, had he not been rebuked, would have been the signal for a general and sudden onslaught of the Apostles—eleven against a thousand, one or two swords against the arms of several Roman cohorts; with what fatal results we can easily imagine.

Peter smote with the sword of the flesh before his conversion. After Pentecost, in the exercise of the sovereign pontificate of Christ's Church, he bore in all meekness the highest authority the world has ever known. He is not pictured in Christian art as bearing a sword, nor are any of his successors. Armed with the sword he failed; armed with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, he ever succeeds in opening the door to straying sheep and shutting it to prowling wolves. St. Paul is the sword-bearer in Christian art, "bearing the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God" (Heb. iv. 12). His words cut deeper than any others, yet only to cut off hindrances to the free action of divine grace, hewing off the whole penal and ceremonial system of the Jewish dispensation and cleaving a way into men's hearts for the gospel of the grace of God (Acts xx. 24).

We have already observed that in all this excitement Jesus alone is calm. Peter was hurried on by his eagerness to protect Christ, who Himself was guided deliberately by the counsels of His Father. Peter failed, as

many others fail, because headlong zeal to accomplish a good end blinds their judgment as to the choice of means, and especially as to the appointment of God in the direction of their superiors. Jesus kept His Superior, His Father, ever in close touch, and never forgot His Father's scriptures, which now He reverently quoted. Very deep was His reverence for those ancient scriptures, which were God's counsel about Him and the whole race of His fellow-men. Point by point, in letter and spirit, would He fulfil them.

May our own hearts in times of distress be like His at His arrest; our Father's chalice to be drunk, His divine will in our hearts, His divine words upon our lips. The result in our case will be the same as in His. His enemies trusted in brute force, and they failed totally and are execrated by all succeeding generations. His Apostles trusted in the same kind of help, and they failed totally. He alone was right. He trusted in gentle persuasion and patient suffering, and the whole world adores Him as its Master. Peter chooses the sword, and presently, as we shall see, he turns coward, and that of the meanest kind. Jesus assails him with the weapon of love, an affectionate look, and he is immediately recovered to his Master, nay, he is transformed into a hero.

Our Redeemer now saw that He was to be dragged away from His beloved Apostles, and His farewell thought was for their safety. He said to the leaders of His enemies: "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way"; and as He spoke these words, which saved His faithful friends, He reached out His hands for the handcuffs of his foes—hands already fast bound in the fetters of resignation to His Father's will.

He thus saved His disciples. He did so because He insisted on absorbing Himself alone all the suffering of the world's atonement, He would tread the wine press alone (Isaias lxiii. 6); and because, as He had carefully instructed them, He would have them survive Him for founding and organizing His Church. And also to show His tender love for them. Therefore, had He said to His Father: "Of them that thou gavest Me, I have not lost any one" (John xviii. 9).

Although He had surrendered to His enemies, they dared not assail His followers. They could not forget His power in hurling them backward, a miracle mainly intended, perhaps, for this very purpose.

If it be asked how His assailants dared still persist in arresting Him after this evidence of miraculous power, the answer is that the pagans in the band knew Him only as a magician, and the Jews believed Him in league with Beelzebub.

"Then His disciples leaving Him, all fled away." They were ready to fight, but unwilling to be arrested and to suffer with Him. And so they fled away, one and all, and the soldiers "took Jesus and bound Him." Our Redeemer is at last in the hands of His enemies.

CHAPTER III.

Jesus a Prisoner.

Then His disciples leaving Him, all fled away. Then they came up and laid hands upon Him and held Him. Then the band and the tribune and the servants of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him. And they led him away to the high priest's house (Matt. xxvi. 50, 56, 57; Mark xiv. 46, 50, 53; Luke xxii. 54; John xviii. 12, 13).

And so at last Jesus is delivered to His enemies, bound and led away. How great a shock to His feelings as He exchanges the company of His Apostles for that of the men led by Judas, revelling in their mastery over Him. A while ago He felt that His words were their terror and dismay; now He is their helpless victim, and His majestic power is stripped from Him, so to remain till after His death.

Yet He felt consoled at what He had achieved since leaving the Garden. He had plainly shown that He gave Himself up voluntarily, first by holding off the angelic legions, then by miraculously casting His assailants backward to the ground, and finally by healing Malchus' ear. He had made a last effort to save Judas. He had secured the safety of His Apostles. He had taught an immortal lesson of submission to the divine will, never losing touch with His Father's purpose, ever adverting to the scriptures for His plans and His motives. He had recorded His protest against the treachery and violence of His

arrest in the darkness and secrecy of the night. All this with indescribable elevation of spirit and manner, and with perfect calmness of mind, though meanwhile His soul was sorrowful even unto death. And now He gives His wrists to be bound, and offers His neck to the rope with which they will drag Him away.

We believe that His first sensation was the pain of being alone. To few is it given to know the full meaning of that word *alone*, to none except those in the plight of our Redeemer at His arrest; not only abandoned by all friends divine and human, but suddenly flung into the clutches of deadly enemies. When He entered the Garden He, indeed, bade adieu to His Father's consolation. He retained, however, the company of His disciples, best loved of all His people. Dull and slow of heart as they were, he knew them to be loyal and true. And now with a quick offering of Himself to the stern justice of His Father—that silent and relentless exactor of our ransom—Jesus also bids farewell to those beloved earthly associates, those friends whom He had so carefully chosen, and who had shared His marvelous career for three eventful years. As He is bound and led away, He turns a lingering glance back upon them and sees their forms vanishing into the shadows of the olive orchard. He is abandoned now by both God and man. His only comfort is that He has so managed that His Apostles shall not be molested nor pursued.

We know not whether his hands were tied together in front or behind His back. From Judas' word of caution we may suppose the latter, as being the safer way; and for the same reason, also, that He was led along by a rope tied about His neck. We may be certain, too, that

the arrest was accompanied with acts of violence. Our hearts bleed as in spirit we stand by and hear their shouts of triumph over Him, the foul names they call Him, and see them begin to beat Him. Deep as was the gloom of His soul, deeper still was His sense of submissiveness to them as the instruments of our redemption. He was entirely collected and self-possessed as they hurried Him off to His fate.

Knowing the feelings of the chief priests, our Savior's captors may well have supposed that He would be put to death inside of an hour, and this made them all the more pitiless. He was very tightly and securely bound, not only from fear of a rescue, but because their leaders hated Him intensely, and they would avenge upon Him the fall He had just given them by His magical arts, as they deemed His miraculous gifts.

The arrest of Jesus created, without doubt, considerable stir in the city, late as was the hour. The detachment of soldiers was in the neighborhood of a thousand strong, under as high an officer as a military tribune, thus lending at this early stage of the passion emphatic sanction of the Roman authority to the proceedings against Jesus. Then some members of the priesthood were there, in order to make sure of receiving their victim from the disciple to whom they had paid money for Him; and with them there was "a great multitude" of their officials and servants. So large a body must have disturbed the city by its movements, especially while returning with their prisoner. We can be quite sure that, as they went back into the city, the adherents of the chief priests began at that midnight hour those yells of derision, triumph, hatred, fury, that formed so prominent a feature

of the occurrences later on in the passion. How their voices grated on Jesus' ear and stunned His heart. How their scowling faces shocked Him. How could He help remembering the acclaim of praise and worship with which the Jewish multitudes received Him the preceding Sunday.

How different an entrance into Jerusalem was that. The disciples go to a friend's house in the city and bring out a peaceful ass, and Jesus, seated on this humble beast as His royal charger, enters the city at high noon in triumph, amid the loud cheers of a vast assemblage of the people. And now, a disciple has turned spy; he has gone to the murderous enemies of Jesus and he has sold his Master's life away for money; he leads out and guides a band of soldiers and hirelings; and Jesus at the dead hour of night is dragged, handcuffed and in shame, to His death amid the jeers of "a great multitude" of ferocious wretches.

Patient endurance of injuries is given a lofty place among our Christian virtues by this night's occurrences. And, besides this, behold how Christian obedience shines forth. From the moment He offers His all-powerful hands to be manacled by His deadly foes, and is led off wholly subject to them, until He expires, Jesus scarcely ever uses His liberty. We say scarcely ever; for He did refuse to obey both the chief priests and Pilate when they bade Him answer, and also Herod. In those cases He resumed His liberty in the interests of His atonement, for His silence but strengthened His enemies against Him. The worth of His example of obedience to us is shown when we consider that the peculiar malice of every sin takes at last the form of disobedience: "I have broken Thy yoke,

and I have burst Thy bond, and I have said: I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20).

How deep a love is Thine for me, O Jesus, to urge Thee to so great a sorrow, so sad a death! How eager Thy purpose, how urgent Thy love. When the prodigal, his heart full of true repentance, was yet afar off, his father ran to meet him. While Judas, his heart full of all guile, was yet approaching, Thou didst say: Let us hasten to meet him who will betray Me. O Jesus, it was not Judas and his band that made Thee captive, it was love for me—even me. Love is the fetter that binds Thy hands, love is the seal that closes Thy lips lest they call the hosts of heaven to the rescue—love for me, who have before now enlisted and served in Judas' band, and have had my full share in insulting and tormenting Thee by my sins.

CHAPTER IV.

Jesus Arraigned Before the High Priests.

And they led Him away to Annas first, for He was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was high priest of that year. And Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest. And all the priests and the scribes were assembled together. The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine. Jesus answered him: I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither all the Jews resort, and in secret I have spoken nothing. Why askest thou Me? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them; behold, they know what things I have said. And when He had said these things, one of the servants standing by, gave Jesus a blow, saying: Answerest Thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him: If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me? (Matt. xxvi. 57; Mark xiv. 53; Luke xxii. 54; John xviii. 12, 13, 19-24).

When Jesus was arrested and dragged away it was midnight; Good Friday had come, the happiest day in the life of our race, because our Redeemer's most sorrowful day, that of His death.

While the band of soldiers, guided by Judas and accompanied by some of the leading priests, were engaged in seizing and binding Jesus, the chief conspirators were awaiting their return in the house of Annas. How great was their joy when the breathless messengers announced the success of their plans; at last they had Him in their power. He will be a dead man to-morrow, must have been their exclamation. How much greater their joy

when they actually saw Him. How they must have raged against Him. They would slay Him instantly, but that their malignity is as cunning as it is ferocious. They had no power of life and death, that being reserved to the Roman governor, whom they dare not offend. And He must be crucified—the cruelest of deaths and the most ignominious is to be His. That means Rome's court for His trial for the cross is Rome's gibbet. And now He is to be condemned by the Jewish court to make certain of the same result when He is arraigned before the Roman governor.

Jesus was first examined by Annas because he was the rightful head of the priesthood, and then by Caiaphas, the chief priest by Roman appointment. Just what transpired at the house of Annas we do not know. Doubtless the tribune and the greater part of the soldiers were here dismissed as no longer needed. Then "Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest," both of them arranging to meet and hold court over Jesus in the morning. It was before Caiaphas that He was first regularly examined that night, but not as at a final trial, for the law of Moses mercifully forbade such trials during the hours of darkness; the legal condemnation must be postponed till the return of daylight. The whole substance of accusation and proof could, however, be now conveniently arranged for a more summary and brief process in the early morning. They must make that short, for they must secure every possible moment of time for obtaining on the morrow the condemnation of Jesus and His execution before the Sabbath hours of the evening.

As our Redeemer stands before this court, whose judges are His fiercest enemies, let us honor Him and

adore Him. We gladly do so when we behold Him as the world's teacher, and as He triumphs over the grave in His resurrection. But now He is beginning the work most essential for our salvation, sorrowful of heart, alone among His enemies. Jesus, in Caiaphas' court we adore Thee and we love Thee, and we hail Thee as our Redeemer.

This night process opened with an attempt by the court to force Jesus both to condemn Himself and to betray His friends. "The high priest asked Jesus of His disciples and His doctrine." Our Redeemer answered by stating, what was notoriously true, that His teaching was always open and candid, never concealed from the public. And then He reproached Caiaphas for his injustice in requiring Him to criminate Himself. "Why askest thou Me? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them." They had accused Him and arrested Him; let them now prove their charge against Him.

The dignity of Jesus and His entire calmness and self-possession was an admirable spectacle, greatly in contrast with the hurry and excitement of the conspirators. But this undaunted bearing and His unanswerable defence, beautiful to His friends (if, alas! friends of His any had been there), was perplexing and provoking to His enemies. And as the tones of His voice, so deep and sweet and penetrating, ceased to be heard, silence and dismay fell upon the court room. But they had an answer and they gave it, the only one possible; their craft was baffled and exhausted—silenced, but brute force was yet theirs, always theirs in abundance. "One of the servants standing by gave Jesus a blow," doubtless by suggestion of one of the chief priests. Jesus received this out-

rageous indignity very patiently; and, addressing the court through this minion, again demanded evidence of His guilt and protested against the blow given Him. That blow was an awful deed. Would that every affront offered me had left me as unmoved as was my innocent Redeemer when that coward struck Him in the face. Let me contrast the fury of the ruffian and the calmness of his victim, and learn a lesson.

This is the first recorded blow that Jesus received in His passion. Yet He may have been struck at His seizure in the Garden by some of the infuriated rabble of the chief priests' servants, doubtless He was. At any rate, blows of all kinds soon became common enough. Such arguments as blows they offered plentifully, till He expired under them. He had challenged them to produce evidence of His guilt; they answered by beating Him in the face with their fists—the best evidence of their own malicious injustice, and of His entire innocence as well as perfect patience.

This blow, O Jesus! struck by one who stands in my place, is the first token I give Thee in Thy passion; Thy corpse in Mary's arms will bear many another mark I shall have stamped on Thee by my partners' hands—pledges of my hate, given with fist and scourge, with nail and spear. And, O marvel of forgiveness! these very wounds that now I deal Thee will yet remind Thee most lovingly of me that dealt them, and touch Thy heart with tender memories of me for all eternity.

CHAPTER V.

The Silence of Jesus.

Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put Him to death; and they found not, whereas many false witnesses had come in, and their evidence did not agree. And last of all there came in two false witnesses, saying: We heard Him say: I am able to destroy the Temple of God, made with hands, and within three days I will build another not made with hands. And their witness did not agree. And the high priest, rising up in the midst, asked Jesus, saying: Answerest Thou nothing to the things that are laid to Thy charge by these men? But He held His peace, and answered nothing (Matt. xxvi. 59-66; Mark xiv. 55-64).

Of all the hidden wisdom of Christ none is more inaccessible to the worldly minded than silent endurance of injuries. Nor are the more Christian minded quite free from dubious questioning as to the good policy of standing mute in the face of unjust accusation, even in our Savior's trials before the chief priests, Pilate and Herod. These trials involved all that God and man could hold dear, the fair fame of the Son of God and His release from imminent peril of the most shameful death. And how *could* He keep silent, we are tempted to ask, when His heart was consumed with burning zeal for truth and justice, now being fearfully outraged?

Why not, instead of silent suffering, have given us at these trials a series of discourses equal to those He gave in the quiet and security of the supper-room? These

form the most touching appeals to our heart's love; those before Caiaphas and Pilate would be the greatest invectives against crime ever known. What an opportunity to exercise his office of teacher. No; He decided to remain silent. And His reasons are easily found if we reverently take His place. This is not His time of vindication but of suffering. Vindication is now impossible, except by an entire reversal of the divine plan, which is the inflicting of justice upon Him as the price of mercy for us. His office is that of atonement, and it now claims a monopoly; it is higher, if possible, than that of teaching, and it is jealous of its prerogative.

Nor have we any reason to suppose that He would be allowed to give such a defence as our instinctive sense of justice calls for. And even if permitted to make it, it would not move His judges to do Him justice, but rather deepen their hate and give a blacker shade to their guilt.

And, meanwhile, Jesus does teach. His silence under these awful accusations is a powerful lesson by example. It has nerved millions of Christians to humble acceptance of calumny in the interests of peace and for the sake of saving the calumniators themselves. The silence of our Redeemer has made many a one more Christ-like than even His divine words. The *Ecce Homo* would not teach us God's love for man half so well if its plaintive silence were broken by a single word. His silence has been the inspiration of His Church's eloquence in His praise ever since, singing and proclaiming to the nations His adorable patience under the obloquy of our sins; for patience is better shown by the sufferer than by the advocate.

And consider the few words He did say, from His seizure in the Garden till He expired, and you will own

that they would lose much of their marvelous force if they had been lost in a great multitude of other words, which could only have been less wonderful, and would have distracted our rapture of attention to His teachings.

From the time Jesus was arrested till the trials were all over and He took up His journey to Calvary, there passed about twelve hours. During all those hours He was constantly being addressed, questioned, cursed, accused; and the number of words that He uttered in reply, when translated into English, is considerably less than three hundred, which could all be spoken at a leisurely rate in three minutes; twelve hours of incessant accusation and railing, and twelve hours of silent submission lacking three minutes.

Jesus scarcely lifted His voice and never His hand, though omnipotent in both, in His defence. This was because even if he had been successful in His pleading, He would have robbed us of the most perfect manifestation of divine love; the Son of God meekly suffering, bleeding, dying for man's redemption. When we gather about His pulpit on Calvary we shall hear words which, though few to count, are enough to instruct into salvation all the generations of mankind, words uttered not in defence of Himself, but in love of us and all His other enemies.

Thus His line of defence, well determined beforehand, was silence as the usual rule, with an occasional and reluctantly uttered word, one which might best serve His chief purpose—suffering. And ever since that time silence under insult and injury has gained many a high victory in the career of God's servants; but none so perfect as that of Christ Himself before these tribunals.

Never was a plan of defence more successful, that is to say, more fatal to the alleged culprit, Christ, and more favorable to the real culprit, our fallen humanity.

Jesus was not silent out of disdain for His accusers and their perjured court, for in His ministry He had given that class all the discourse with Him they ever asked, and much more. His was not a sullen silence, any more than it was a cowardly one. It was dictated by charity. Jesus chose to be silent because that is a form of resisting evil which lessens the malignity of enemies by abstaining from further provocation; and also because it adds a peculiar merit of meekness to patient suffering.

Silent and observing and praying and suffering—there stood Jesus in Caiaphas' court. "Who will start a devotion to the unknown sorrows of Jesus?" are words borrowed from the old English Catholic poet, Richard Crashaw.

The example of Christ thus favors silence as a mode of defence. Few there are who, like Him, had rather be silent than speak out in their own defence, as long as the rights of other men and of God are not endangered. Yet consider how, in defending oneself, it is extremely difficult to safeguard truth, justice and charity toward our adversaries, not to mention humility. Self-defence in nearly every case degenerates presently into self-approval, and is too often noisy, heated and retaliatory invective. Argument, by contrasting oneself with others, is odious to a true Christian, and is almost inevitable in a heated defence.

The trouble is that we fancy that silence under accusation is not a mode of defence at all, but rather a confession of guilt, a form of consent to the accusations

against us; whereas, allowing for exceptions, it simply appropriates the present to the practice of humility, and postpones defence to the time and circumstances appointed by Providence, a time of greater peace and circumstances favoring a fuller vindication. Present suffering means future joy in this as in so many other cases. How marvelously was this shown in our Redeemer's trials, and how many elect souls have been made perfect by herein following His example.

How perfect and overwhelming are the vindications of Providence. Yet who is willing to wait for them? Our Redeemer's example teaches us that in times of trial much silence and little speaking is our best co-operation with God's purposes in permitting such visitations. Not the least of these is the cure of pride. There are some bodily diseases cured by mere abstinence from food. And in like manner many diseases of our souls are helped—and some are cured, notably vain glory—by silence under accusations true or false, silence being in such cases the abstinence of the mind from the food of pride.

CHAPTER VI.

The Judges, the Witnesses, the Evidence.

Now Caiaphas was he who had given the counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine. Jesus answered him: I have spoken openly to the world. . . . Why askest thou Me? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them; behold, they know what things I have said. And when He had said these things, one of the servants standing by, gave Jesus a blow, saying: Answerest Thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him: If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me? . . . And last of all, there came in two false witnesses, saying: We heard Him say: I am able to destroy the Temple of God, made with hands, and within three days I will build another not made with hands. And their witness did not agree (Matt. xxvi. 59-61; Mark xiv. 55-59; John xviii. 14, 19-23).

Before considering the final scene in the trial of Jesus before Caiaphas, we can profit by a general survey of the methods and the matter of the legal process, as arranged and carried out by the chief priests. St. Chrysostom remarks: "The same persons bring the charge, discuss it and pass sentence." He might add that these also suborned the false witnesses. "The chief priests and the whole council sought false witnesses against Jesus." In all the proceedings, before both Jewish and Roman courts, every one of the judges was false, and all the witnesses were false, and every sentence pronounced was incredibly false, unjust and cruel.

Imagine the feelings of Jesus as such men "questioned Him about His disciples and His doctrine"; doubtless using such words as these: What dost Thou mean by organizing Thy following? Dost Thou not mean that these are to be lying prophets of Thy heresy? How scornfully they must have asked him: What has become of Thy disciples? Tell us of Judas Iscariot, Thy treasurer and almoner. Tell us of Simon Peter, Thy vicar and key-bearer, who has just now sworn a great oath that he does not know Thee. No wonder that Jesus "held his peace and answered nothing." His silence had more reasons than meekness to explain it. But let us wait; in seven weeks' time the Apostles, at the mention of whose names Jesus now hangs His head in shame, will step forth the most majestic characters the world has ever known. These caitiffs will yet rout all the hosts of idolatry, and make of the paganized universe a new earth and a new heaven. These shrinking creatures will utterly wither up Judaism as a religion, at the very time that Providence is scattering the people of Israel to the ends of the earth.

All nations have ever since been questioning about His doctrine and His disciples. His doctrine opens heaven to our hopes, reveals the infinite God as our Father, our Brother and the Spouse of our souls. His discipleship is a universal brotherhood of mutual affection, in which the Apostles and their successors give God's pardon to sinners, and offer Christ's very self in all fulness of love to every earnest seeker after peace and joy.

"I have spoken openly," said Jesus; ask those that heard Me, as if to say, for the city is full of them. What! will you force Me to convict Myself? I have had no concealments. You have arrested Me and accused Me, prove

your case if you can; witnesses are plenty. So spoke Jesus, not arrogantly, but in all the confidence of candor and truth. Then, as we have seen, a dastardly deed was done. One of the attendants gave Jesus a blow. Jesus received meekly this cowardly insult, fettered as He was, alone and friendless. He did not reproach the wretch for his ignoble act, but even condescended to remonstrate with him.

Forced to bring in testimony against their prisoner, it was found to be utterly worthless. The witnesses testified that He had blasphemed God's holy temple in saying that He was able to destroy it, and build it again in three days. He had uttered this prophecy very early in His mission (John ii. 19), never dreaming of irreverence towards God's house, but referring to the temple of His own body and His resurrection after death. They knew His meaning very well, as was shown later by their request to Pilate for a guard to be placed over His grave.

But they must try Him, and they must convict Him any way, deeply distressed that they dared not spill His blood on the spot and without any form of trial. The habit of law was on them, and they must observe legal forms in their murder of Jesus, both to deceive the Jewish people and to be in a position to say to Pontius Pilate: "According to our law He ought to die." Jesus suffered no small grief to witness the venerable forms of Hebrew justice used as a cloak for the worst possible outrage upon its principles and upon the only-begotten Son of its very author.

They had many witnesses, all false; and, being commonplace villains, their perjury was more manifest than even that of their masters. Jesus heard Himself accused

of blasphemy, heresy, sedition. Did He cross-question the witnesses? It is quite certain that He did not, would not be permitted, would not wish to do so. Nor was it necessary, for their evidence was to that degree false that it was self-contradictory.

As before this court, so before the others, Jesus saw every rule of justice violated. Not only was the evidence of brutish liars admitted against Him, the very soul of truth and absolutely guiltless, but no time was given Him to prepare His defence, nor counsel to conduct it, nor freedom to address the court. Yet meanwhile He knew Himself to be every sinner's advocate in His Father's court, and in His inmost heart He now steadfastly purposed to plead for the pardon of these same cruelly unjust judges in the very throes of His approaching death.

How different His Father's court from theirs. How the divine Judge is loathe to arraign the sinner, sending him a thousand warnings beforehand. Secret inspirations of grace beset his soul in every quiet hour, every devout friend is a messenger from God, warning him and imploring him to be reconciled, and pointing to the only-begotten Son of God, condemned and executed for his salvation, as his certain pledge of pardon if he will but be saved. Our Redeemer, true to this divine spirit of lenity, will shortly remind these, His very persecutors, of the judgment that awaits them if they do not repent.

Besides the contrast between God's justice and that of the Jewish judges, our Lord's trial teaches us the admirable virtue of openness and frankness in our dealings with men, even with the most perverse, nay, when faced by our worst enemies. "I have spoken openly to the world, and in secret I have spoken nothing." Indeed, O

Lord Jesus, Thou hast ever been the soul of candor. Thou dost abhor an intriguing spirit, with its whispered conferences and its confidential disclosures of other's faults. "Let your speech be yea, yea; nay, nay" (Matt. v. 37), is Thy command, and Thy practice is a perfect model of how to observe it. Blessed be that disciple who can say with Thee that his spoken words are always the very same as his secret thoughts.

And in this connection we thank our Savior for the sacrament of penance, His chosen court of pardon. That is the one only place in this double-dealing world in which entire frankness is secured; and it is rewarded with the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Ghost. There the windows of my soul are by my own free hand flung wide open, and broad daylight is let in, and even the most secret chambers of my very thoughts are placed under inspection. God's light and love are the reward of my truthfulness in a trial in which I am both the culprit and the accusing witness.

CHAPTER VII.

Jesus is Condemned to Death by the Chief Priests.

And the high priest said to Him: I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us, if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith to Him: Thou hast said it. I am. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy; what think you? But they all answering, said: He is guilty of death. And when morning was come, all the chief priests and ancients of the people took council against Jesus, that they might put Him to death. And they brought Him into their council, saying: If Thou be the Christ, tell us. And He saith to them: If I shall tell you, you will not believe Me, and if I shall also ask you, you will not answer Me, nor let Me go. But hereafter the Son of Man shall be sitting on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all: Art Thou then the Son of God? Who said: You say that I am. And they said: What need we any further testimony? For we ourselves have heard it from His own mouth (Matt. xxvi. 63-66, and xxvii. 1; Mark xiv. 61-64, and xv. 1; Luke xxii. 66-71).

The chief priests had failed to force Jesus to convict Himself by avowing His doctrines. Left to their legal shifts they had failed. They succeeded, however, and that without difficulty, in drawing from Him a plain affirmation that He was the Christ, that is to say, the Jewish Messias, and the Son of God. To extort a confession from their prisoner, with a view to His condemnation, was base tyranny. Jesus, however, was willing to

be thus convicted, but only after they gave over their attempt to condemn Him by regular process of evidence, and had thereby tacitly acknowledged their failure. He would now freely go to His death for claiming to be the anointed of the Lord and the Son of the Eternal Father. He foresaw, besides, that in the earlier centuries of His Church, millions of martyrs would offer up their lives to witness that He was the living and true God; He would gladly lead the way to martyrdom. In proclaiming His divinity in that court, He felt that He addressed the whole people of Israel, for these were their judges and their priests. When, therefore, Caiaphas exclaimed: "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God," He answered instantly: "Thou hast said it. I am."

Thereby did Jesus choose, at the expense of His life, to honor His Father, in whose adorable name He had been questioned, rather than delay the fate reserved for Him by continuing to remain silent. His claim of the divine Sonship was what His enemies hated most fiercely. Even if understood only figuratively, it was the assumption of sovereign majesty over all Israel, over all nations. But they knew full well that He claimed to be not figuratively but literally the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, of one and the same nature with Jehovah Himself. They had more than once accused Him that He said: "God was His Father, making Himself equal to God" (John v. 18). Jesus, knowing all this, now pleaded guilty to their most serious accusation, and He did so without the slightest hesitation; He proclaimed Himself the Son of God and the anointed King of Israel.

And He drove it home; He followed it up by citing

them before His own judgment seat at the last day: "Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven." His expression "nevertheless" means this: Although I am your fettered prisoner now, and you, murderers in your hearts, now sit in judgment on Me, yet in spite of My present helplessness, nay, by very reason of this degradation and the doom that is to follow it, the day will come when our places shall be reversed. You shall see Me, in the midst of the heavens, descending from the divine throne itself, God and Man, to judge you in justice who now judge Me in iniquity. These are terrible words; but we know that in thus threatening these miserable men His purpose was merciful—it was to honor His Father, indeed, but also to save these dreadful sinners by arousing in their souls the fear of the divine judgment which was sure to overtake them.

Then Caiaphas rent his garments, a Hebrew token of horror and grief. He rent his outer garments; he had long since torn to shreds his priestly virtue, his judicial honor. He rent his clothes theatrically, to call off attention from the majestic Being standing before him, and from His most startling claim to divine power, lest any member of the court might weaken in his fidelity to their plot. And as he rends his garments Caiaphas throws off all shame and openly discards even his former transparent pretence to be judge, and openly assumes the part of prosecutor: "He hath blasphemed, what further need have we of witnesses? Behold you have heard the blasphemy, what think you?" But they all answering, said: "He is guilty of death."

And Jesus in His inmost soul echoed that sentence: I am guilty of death. I have blasphemed; for those whom I love have done it by a thousand different forms of grievous sin, and love has made Me one with them, each and all. Their sins have become Mine for expiation. For their sakes I am guilty of death.

Thus Jesus assumed our sins and accepted their penalty; not resenting the high priests' sentence, but gladly accepting it, and including him and all his hideous associates in His all-embracing pity. Throughout this dreadful ordeal, suffering as He did from fiercest hatred and blind fury, from contemptible cowardice and brazen falsehood—through it all our Redeemer's love for every one of them but grew more intense as their malice grew more venomous.

Death is a terrible word. But, as Caiaphas shouted it, it lit up the darkened soul of Jesus with a bright ray of light, for His death meant life eternal to those He loved so devotedly. This most Holy One, being the brightness of God's glory and the figure of His substance (Heb. i. 3), had taken on Himself to atone for our sins. "Now the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). This was why He submitted that night and the next day to be condemned to death by all of earth's tribunals. As each one of them, either from malice or cowardice, adjudged Him guilty, the high court of hell resounded with their echo: He is guilty of death! Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Thus the world and its votaries, hell and its devils, judged and condemned Jesus to death, Himself the supreme and only arbiter of life and death.

O Redeemer of my soul! I ought to take Thy place before these unjust tribunals, unjust for Thee, entirely

just for me. And if Thou hast exempted me from trial and condemnation, by becoming my substitute, at least let me be humbled by the spectacle of Thy misfortunes, borne so patiently for my sake. Let me be spiritually enlightened by Thy words, Thy silence and Thy submission, so that, instructed in the sovereign virtues of meekness before men and resignation to God's will, I may merit a favorable sentence in Thy court. O Jesus, how much reason have I not to thank Thee, that Thou alone art my judge, and that the law by which Thou art bound to sentence me, instead of being strict justice, is unlimited mercy. I thank Thee, that Thou, the only perfectly just judge, art the one who is perfectly merciful, if I will but seek Thy tribunal now with a humble and contrite heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

Peter's Denial.

And Simon Peter followed Jesus afar off to the high priest's palace, and so did another disciple. And that disciple was known to the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the court of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. The other disciple, therefore, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the portress, and brought in Peter. And going in he sat with the servants to see the end. And the maid that was portress saith to Peter: Art not thou also one of this Man's disciples? He saith: I am not. Now the servants and officers stood at a fire of coals, because it was cold, and warmed themselves; and with them was Peter also standing and warming himself. And there came to him a servant-maid of the high priest; and when she had seen Peter warming himself, and had earnestly beheld him, she said: Thou also was with Jesus of Nazareth, the Galilean. But he denied before them all, saying: Woman, I know Him not: I neither know nor understand what thou sayest. And he went forth before the court, and the cock crew. And as he went out of the gate, another maid saw him, and she saith to the standers-by: This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, that: I know not the Man. And another seeing him, said therefore to him: Art not thou also one of His disciples? He denied it, and said: O man, I am not. And after the space, as it were, of one hour, one of the servants of the high priest, a kinsman to him whose ear Peter cut off, saith to him: Did not I see thee in the Garden with Him? Again, therefore, Peter denied: Man, I know not what thou sayest. And they came that stood by, and said again to Peter: Surely thou art one of them, for thou art also a Galilean; even thy speech doth discover thee. Then he began to curse and swear, saying: I know not this Man of whom you speak. And immediately the cock crew again (Matt. xxvi. 58, 69-74; Mark xiv. 54, 66-71; Luke xxii. 54-61; John xviii. 15-18, 25-27).

While Jesus was being tried and condemned inside the high priest's house, a most deplorable scene was enacted without. Peter was denying his Master. That Jesus knew of this overwhelming calamity to Him and His cause is certain, but whether by its being cast up to Him by His judges, or by supernatural means, we cannot tell.

The origin of the disciple's fall was curiosity and self-conceit. These traits were stronger in Peter than obedience and humility.

How earnestly had Jesus directed them all to fly from the scene of His trial before the chief priests; how plainly had he forewarned Peter of his weakness. But that disciple was devoured with curiosity to "see the end," and puffed up with incredible self-confidence, a defect inherent in his nature.

Of course we are inclined to palliate Peter's fault, but hardly any event in the passion of Jesus cut Him deeper than this. We may, however, surmise with regard to his first denial, that Peter would try to persuade himself that it was no worse than a common lie, told for a laudable purpose, since he thought he had a right to "see the end." He would say to himself: She ("the maid that was portress") has no right to know who I am; and, anyway, she only half suspects me; besides, this conversation is all alone with her—no danger of scandal; and I ought to "see the end," anyhow. O how fatal are the workings of a tricky conscience. For presently he denies his Lord again, and now before many servants and officials and in response to a more downright accusation of discipleship. Finally, with cursing and swearing he proclaims (it must have been in a loud voice): "I know not the Man!" Now, indeed, he has

seen the end; this is the end and the total downfall of Peter's pride, the end and the perfection and the worst of all the evil that the Lord's friends ever did to pain Him after Judas had betrayed Him.*

Like any other sinner, Peter, having fallen once, thought it no great matter to fall again, and then a third time. But the two last denials were rather a series of more and more emphatic infidelities than separate offences; only that his perjury stains his guilt a deeper dye. We may attribute his starting away after his second denial to the alarm of his conscience at the sound of the crowing of the cock. But "as he was going out of the gate" he was caught again. Another maid-servant (how keen the eyes of those women in that dimly lighted court) recognized him and accosted him. Her words threw our poor Apostle into a coward's panic. And then he actually swore an oath—he must have shouted it out in his excitement—that he did not so much as know Jesus.

This drew, it would seem, much more general attention to him; and it appears that the officers and attendants exchanged views among themselves about Peter and his repudiation of even acquaintance with Jesus. He, meanwhile, thought that his oath had secured him from further annoyance, and so the unfortunate Apostle returned again from the gate, and lingered in the throng for "the space as it were of an hour." Then he was interrogated again, very pointedly, too, and by several dif-

*We may notice in passing that here is the nearest approach to any women being against Jesus throughout His passion—these two maid-servants questioning Peter. They occasioned the deep wound Peter inflicted on his Master; but it is not at all clear that they meant to do so. It is quite fair to suppose that they were really on our Redeemer's side, or at worst indifferent and simply curious.

ferent persons, all accusing him of having been seen in the Garden of Olives with Jesus, and calling attention to his Galilean accent. Peter is now fairly at bay, and dreads immediate arrest. He saves himself by a torrent of perjury and poltroonery. "He then began to curse and to swear, saying: I know not this Man of whom you speak. And immediately the cock crew again."

St. Bede moralizes upon this sad occurrence as follows: "How hurtful is converse with the wicked! Peter amongst the servants of the high priest said he knew not the Man, though among the disciples he confessed Him to be God."

Besides increasing our Savior's weight of sorrow, the effects of Peter's denial were doubtless very injurious upon the whole situation. What must the chief priests have said when they learned of it? This, perhaps: Let us push right on to the death of the wretch; His closest friends have abandoned Him; we are safe, we can go to any extreme. What must have been the heart weakening of the multitude of Christ's wavering adherents, as the news is spread everywhere that His Apostles have declared against Him? Their leader and spokesman, in company with John, His favorite disciple, has renounced and repudiated Him openly at the high priest's house; and everybody knows that He was delivered up by another Apostle, His very treasurer. All this will add nerve to the activity of the conspirators Friday forenoon in pleading before Pilate, and also in managing the multitude.

And Jesus? Deserted, abandoned, forsaken, alone among My enemies. But yet I have a heart for My poor Apostle, and I have a loving purpose to save him.

CHAPTER IX.

Peter's Repentance and Pardon.

And the Lord, turning, looked on Peter. And Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said unto him: Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny Me thrice. And going forth he wept bitterly (Matt. xxvi. 75; Mark xiv. 72; Luke xxii. 61, 62).

If Peter's fall is lamentable, his conversion is most consoling; and it was immediate. Our Savior did not give him time to argue out his own guilt, lest he should despair. Jesus wept for His disciple before His disciple wept for himself, and made haste to save him. "Christ," says Cornelius à Lapide, "seems to have been brought down to the outer hall, which was below, and where Peter was. And there, turning to him and smiting him with His gracious look, He recalled him to Himself." Or it was through some window that Jesus looked at him, as He passed along, or from some balcony. He stopped a brief instant and turned; Master and disciple saw each other in the light of the lamps and torches. Their eyes met and their hearts met. The tears in the Master's eyes opened the fountains of Peter's grief.

Or perhaps it was a closer meeting. Whilst Peter stood abashed and cowed in the courtyard, hanging his head and not daring to look into the faces around him, some of them full of threatening and others showing

contempt, presently there is a stir, and then the sound of many footsteps—Jesus is being led from one part of the building to another, and Peter sees by the light of the fire another face looking at him from amid the passing group of soldiers. It is a face too well known to him. Not a word is said; only looks are exchanged. What sadness in the look of Jesus, what reproach, and yet what compassion. Jesus is utterly silent; but more startling than a thunderclap to Peter's soul is the look of his Master, calling him instantly back to his allegiance, melting his very soul into penitential tears.

St. Leo says: "The Lord, though exposed to the revilings of the priests, the falsehood of the witnesses and the insults of those who smote and spat upon Him, looked upon Peter." And he adds that Jesus seemed to forget His own fate and to be trembling for that of Peter. He forgot everything but His Apostle. The awful court, the scowling faces, the sentence of death, all vanished away in His pity for Peter.

O, good Jesus, how sad was Thy plight when Thou wast passing out from Thy trial before the council. But Thou didst forget the blow they struck Thee, the yet more cruel blows of Thy enemies' tongues, Thy dread of what was coming upon Thee; turning, Thou didst save Peter with an affectionate glance—turning away from Thine to his misfortune, mindful of him, forgetful of Thyself.

Jesus would be insensible even to the flames and the demons of the pit of darkness in His anxiety to save any soul from despair, but especially Peter's. And from despair that one look of his Master saved Peter. Judas would not be saved by many affectionate and forgiving

looks, the washing of his feet, the loving embrace and kiss, and the tenderest words of entreaty ever uttered. A single look was given to Peter, "and going forth, he wept bitterly." Bitterly indeed; for the woe and disfigurement of his Master's face increased tenfold the bitter pain of the holy wound which that look cut in his heart.

Peter's repentance was the first fruit of our Redeemer's atoning passion. And it was true and permanent repentance. He had now seen "the end"—the end of pride. Boasting himself a man of undaunted courage, and overflowing with self-confidence, when called on to own Christ as his Master, he blenched before maid-servants and other menials. He will never again be boastful, but full of self-distrust and self-contempt, and therefore of true Christian courage.*

This one look of Jesus was the only reproof that Peter ever got. Herein is seen how perfectly Jesus forgives, and with what a measure of love heaped up and flowing over. After His resurrection He never so much as hinted to Peter, least of all to any one else, that He retained any remembrance of his fall; Jesus acted as if it had never happened. He showed Himself in His glory to Peter the first of all the Apostles, and He confirmed him in his Apostolic primacy with much solemnity, eliciting for its foundation Peter's thrice given offering of love.

We feel peculiar joy in this our Master's tender pity, and it cures our soreness of heart at the Apostle's shame-

*Notice that St. Mark in his Gospel does not hide Peter's fall, though when he wrote it he was that Apostle's close disciple. This is because his Gospel was Peter's own, as is most probable, and gave him the opportunity of public confession, a privilege highly valued by all heroic penitents.

ful unfaithfulness. And let us for our comfort compare Peter, shrinking and trembling before maid-servants at the name of Jesus, and Peter after his conversion, boldly professing Jesus at the hazard of his life, and defying for His sake Caiaphas and the whole council of the Jews (Acts iv. 5).

Some mitigation of Peter's crime is found in the fact that the Lord chose His Apostles from the mass of mankind, as it were at haphazard, selecting from among us genuine specimens of our common frailty. See the glory of His transforming grace. After He has done His work upon them, He returns them to us, and with them leavens the whole lump of our humanity with a new creation of loyalty to God and compassion for sinful man.

Another mitigation is Peter's lack of support from his comrade Apostle, namely John, for it is commonly agreed that he was the other disciple with Peter in Caiaphas' court. He did not, it is true, join Peter in his craven act; that much is to his credit. But he stood by and said nothing; and that is dreadfully to his disgrace. Was he not half as guilty as Peter? Must not the maid-servants, and after them the many officers and attendants, have looked also at John as they interrogated and accused Peter? Did not John's silence give consent? O John, where is thy tongue of faith, where is thy heart of love? Where is thy pity for a sorely tempted brother? Hidden and silent now is that faith which will one day amaze the world. Peter denied and John did not reprove him. "The disciple whom Jesus loved" played a timid part that night, a mournful accompaniment to the harsh notes of Peter's outright unfaithfulness. When Jesus passed and looked at Peter, John had his share of the

reproach and of the pardon, and going out with Peter, doubtless shared in his bitter weeping.

We must also say in Peter's favor that his faith did not fail. Christ had secured him in the supper-room against that direst of evils: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 32). He still kept a sad but precious remnant of Christian character, faith without love, that is, without love enough to confess his Master in the face of his enemies.

Furthermore, his fall was gradual, the act of an unwary and not a perverse man; he fell from lesser faults into greater. First, he contradicted Jesus at the last supper, did it with impertinence, and obstinately continued to do it. Second, he arrogantly and boastfully set himself above his fellows. It was with this evil preparation that he rushed into danger. O God! how truly doth pride go before a fall (Prov. xvi. 18). Who that contradicts his betters, who that plumes himself over his brethren, shall hope to be safeguarded against danger?

And so it was that Jesus saved Peter by a loving, reproachful and forgiving glance. A kind look seems no great gift; a hateful one no serious hurt. But one can often express more love or malice by a single look than by a book full of words. And kind looks are often an alms of priceless worth, especially to suffering souls, and above all to guilty ones. May God grant me the grace to receive kind looks from good men, telling me of kind thoughts, followed by kind words, and then by kind deeds, in all my hours of peril and distress, of weakness and of guilt.

"Look on us, O Lord Jesus," says St. Ambrose, "that we may bewail our sins and wash away our guilt with

our tears." How many times, O Lord, dost Thou look on men and immediately their souls remember Thy sorrows and they begin to lament their sins. Tears of contrition and amendment follow Thy reproachful looks, which are Thy inward inspirations of the grace of repentance. Philip had said to Thee: "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us" (John xiv. 8). Not so do we ask; but rather with the royal penitent we beg Thee to cause the light of Thy "countenance to shine upon us and have mercy on us" (Ps. lxvi. 2). In the very midst of the vilest cowardice, O Jesus, Thy loving glance will make heroes of us as it did of Peter.

CHAPTER X.

Jesus is Mocked.

And the men that held Him, mocked Him and struck Him. Then did they spit in His face and buffeted Him. And they blindfolded Him, and smote His face with the palms of their hands, saying: Prophecy to us, O Christ! Who is he that struck Thee? And blaspheming, many other things they said against Him (Matt. xxvi. 67, 68; Mark xiv. 65; Luke xxii. 63-65).

The chief priests had done their worst against Jesus for the moment. They then turned Him over to their servants to be maltreated during the remaining hours of the night, while they refreshed their nerves by sleep, dreaming sweet dreams of anticipation of the day's work before them. Jesus knew why they gave Him up to the common herd of ruffians; it was that He might suffer a sort of indignities they themselves would be ashamed to inflict. Our Redeemer willingly yielded Himself into the power of the base rabble of menials and hangers-on about the house and court of Caiaphas. He was perfectly well aware that cruelty is the very sport of such men, and beating men in the face, spitting upon them, kicking them, is their keenest enjoyment. Doing such things to Jesus was a treat to them, especially as they knew that such was the will of their masters. As kind natures enjoy nursing the sick, so do vile natures enjoy beating their fellow-men and spitting in their faces. And these wretches hated Jesus because He was gentle and affectionate, and therefore a reproach to them. It pleased them greatly to have Him totally given up to them.

And He was entirely resigned to have this lowest class of men do their will upon Him that night, for to Him the lowest of mankind are the dearest, and the most fitting atonement for their sins would be enduring their maltreatment. What virtue did He not practice for them and for us that last night of His gentle life? How patient He is, how constant and forgiving, how humble and submissive. What place can pride have in the life of any one whose religion gives him Christ for a pattern. How changed are one's views of what is honor among men after meditating on what Christ suffered over night between Holy Thursday and Good Friday? This explains why the martyrs coveted chains and racks as badges of honor, and before them the Apostles of Jesus "went forth from the council rejoicing at being reputed worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Christ" (Acts v. 41).

Hence, it was both as our Redeemer and as our model that Jesus gave Himself up to these pitiless men, that they might mock Him, spit in His face, strike Him with their fists, and do and say all kinds of foul things to Him. "We have seen Him despised," says the prophet, "and His look as it were hidden and despised" (Isaias liii. 2).

Hidden, indeed; for they blindfolded Jesus during part of the time they were beating Him. This was a more ingenious sort of cruelty. For He struck back at them with His patient eyes, and every submissive look made them feel uneasy. Now He cannot hurt them by returning kind looks for foul blows; He can only pray for them. He suddenly feels the blow, it is received in the dark; and this gives a sharper pain to every rude stroke of their fists—darkened in His suffering, alone and helpless.

But they were careful not to stop His ears. They would have him hear the words, fit words to accompany their deeds, the proper speech of such men. They smote His very soul with curses, blasphemies, obscenities, especially mocking at His claim to be a prophet. This was their chief reason for blindfolding Him; as if to say. A rare rogue is this, Jesus, the sham prophet; let us make Him show His powers. And then they struck His blindfolded face, and roared in his ears: "Prophecy to us, O Christ, who it is that struck Thee." Imagine the dreadful words they used, coupled with His holy name, a name so dear to every aching heart; imagine their yells of derisive laughter as His blindfolded face quivered under their blows; imagine the looks and the expression of their animal faces.

"Then did they spit in His face." We suppose that they began spitting in His face only after removing the bandage from His eyes. Think what they then did to that face of divine sweetness and dignity on which "the angels desire to look" (I. Peter i. 12). The Psalmist implores the Lord: "Show us Thy face, O Lord, and we shall be saved" (lxxix. 4). Show us Thy face, said our Redeemer's tormentors, as they undid the bandage; show us Thy face, and we shall spit in it. And His face was soon covered with their loathsome spittle.

Jesus suffered indescribable shame from this unequalled brutality, but He felt no horror for the miscreants themselves; no, not even the least aversion. On the contrary, they were nearer His heart at that moment than any sinners that ever lived. They were typical sinners. He must have thought: This is the kind of men that need My best love. These are the ones I would pre-

fer to save rather than any others. Father, forgive these deluded creatures, especially the ones among them more malicious, less excusable. We cannot help thinking that many a one of this poor rabble, if not every one of them, was brought sooner or later to repentance and died a happy death. The greater joy of the angels and of Christ, their King, is the repentance of sinners. Shall there be no joy in earning these sinners the necessary graces for repentance? Yet if joy can be had in being spit upon, it must be mingled with an ocean of pain; for it is not joy but pain that atones for sin. And not joy but pain is felt in being spit upon.

Among the wretches, hirelings of an intriguing and apostate priesthood, were certainly all sorts of criminals. To our Lord the life of every one of them was fully revealed in all its foulness, and His soul pitied them with indescribable tenderness, as each took his turn in the mockings and beatings and spittings of that dreadful night. Surely never did a sick child love its mother for her kisses and caresses as tenderly as Jesus loved those men—yea, and loved all of us sinners in their persons, knowing as He did that they were our proxies in their awful work.

Contempt reaches its perfect expression in spitting in another's face; and, of course, the sense of ill-treatment is keenest on the part of one who suffers this indignity. That this infliction ranked high among our Redeemer's sufferings, not only as we see them but as He felt them, is shown by His having expressly named it in His prophecy of the end: "The Son of Man shall be mocked and scourged and spit upon" (Luke xviii. 32). His meekness and goodness received this grossest of insults with entire willingness. "I have not turned away My

face from them that rebuked Me and spit upon Me" (Isaias 1. 6).

Now, O Jesus, dost Thou begin to suffer from without a pain almost equal to what Thou didst feel within, when Thou didst begin "to fear and to be heavy" in the Garden. Then Thou didst see and feel interiorly our sins, all typified by monstrous demons, as Thou wast delivered up to their cruelty. Now living men have taken the place of demons, and they prove to be their worthy rivals in tormenting Thee.

Staying over night beside a sick bed and watching with a dear friend is called a labor of love. Here were the later and quieter hours of our Redeemer's last night, spent by His enemies watching with Him, a labor of hate. Between three and four hours must thus have been passed, when the first rays of the daylight ended this and opened another period of His sufferings. How dreadful was the change in His appearance. Remember Him in the supper-room among His chosen friends, discoursing with them after the sacred banquet. How beautiful is His face, how grave and yet how irresistibly attractive; how benignant His glance, how sweet His words as He addresses them, His loved ones. And now behold that same countenance. His looks are just as affectionate, and these wretches are also His loved ones. But see the swollen and livid spots, His eyes blackened and blood-shot, brimming over with tears. Hard hearts they must have had to look unmoved into that face as they unbound His eyes. Unmoved? It was just then, if we have judged correctly, that they began to spit upon His face, that being the last part of their mockery of Him.

Bear in mind that *all* was suffered by Jesus for two

ends exclusively: One, to offer to the offended majesty of God a full atonement for our sins; the other, to teach us what we ought to think of our sins. God has accepted the atonement. But have we learned our lesson? Jesus suffered thus at the hands of men lest we should undergo worse at the hands of demons. And He suffered it from our partners in guilt. These men are of the same race and family with me. Their motives are identical—wilful disregard of God's rights—only more lamentably shown than my own. Mortal contempt of God's honor inspires every one of their dreadful deeds, as it does my own more artfully managed and more secret offences. My vices place me on a footing of equality with them; only they are eager to display their wickedness, while I am ingenious to conceal mine. They blindfolded Him, not to hide their sinfulness from Him, but to increase His pain, as they cursed Him, struck Him and plucked His beard. I would veil His face if I could, that He might never know my evil deeds—the very offences that made Him willing to suffer every blow and every affront from Caiaphas' underlings.

One comfort is this: Our repentance for our sins, and our sympathy for Jesus' sufferings, though we be so far removed in time and space, were foreknown by Him, and were as welcome to Him then as if we had been present and had mourned with Him on the spot. Another solace, both to Him then and to us now, is that after His resurrection the beauty of His face was all the more resplendent on account of its disfigurement in Caiaphas' prison; just as the marks of the nails and of the spear are now the most glorious adornment of His heavenly body.

The thought of Jesus in bonds reproaches me for the misuse I have made of my liberty. In giving me my own liberty God overtrusted me. I betrayed His trust, and hence the Lord was constrained by His love for me to be deprived of His own freedom. He dared not, He could not stir hand or foot. He was fettered and watched as if He were a tiger ready to spring at men's throats; and then He was maltreated as if He were a captive demon. Alas, how often have I been so weak as to be sure to turn against my Redeemer at the first moment of freedom. And is there ever a moment in which I am really worthy to be trusted? At my best, the words of the Apostle are very applicable to me: "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (I. Cor. x. 12).

CHAPTER XI.

The Fate of Judas.

Then Judas, who betrayed Him, seeing that He was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and ancients, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood. But they said: What is that to us? Look thou to it. And casting down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed, and went and hanged himself with a halter. But the chief priests having taken the pieces of silver, said: It is not lawful to put them into the Corbona, because it is the price of blood. And after they had consulted together, they bought with them the potter's field, to be a burying-place for strangers. Wherefore that field was called Haceldama, that is, The Field of Blood, even to this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the Prophet, saying: And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was prized, whom they prized of the children of Israel. And they gave them unto the potter's field as the Lord appointed to me (Matt. xxvii. 3-10).

In those days, Peter, rising up in the midst of the brethren, said: . . . Men, brethren, the scripture must needs be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was the leader of them that apprehended Jesus; who was numbered with us, and obtained part of this ministry. And he indeed hath possessed a field of the reward of iniquity, and being hanged burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the same field was called in their tongue, Haceldama, that is to say, the field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms: Let their habitation become desolate, and let there be none to dwell therein. And his bishopric let another take. [And they chose Matthias] to take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas hath by transgression fallen, that he might go to his own place (Acts of the Apostles i. 16-25).

And now, before passing with our Redeemer from the custody of the Jews into that of the Romans, let us conclude the history of His betrayer, Judas Iscariot.

"Then Judas, seeing that He was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests." Unhappy wretch! Perhaps his greed had so far blinded him that he had hoped Christ would, somehow or other, manage not to be condemned, would perhaps release Himself miraculously. When he heard of the condemnation of his victim he fell into despair. The depth of his despair is shown by the fact that, with all his avarice, he loosened his grip and delivered up the blood money. And then he confessed his crime to his partners in the ruin of Jesus: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." From the answer he got, "What is that to us?" we infer that he hoped (what a frantic hope it was!) that his return of the money might yet save Jesus. After his accomplices refused it with loathing, Judas cast the money into the sanctuary of the temple, as if he would thereby force the priests to take it back; at any rate, he must be rid of it. His act was observed; but the officials would not apply the money to the uses of the temple, because it was "the price of blood."

"What hypocrisy!" says Cornelius à Lapide. "They suffer not the price of Christ's blood to be paid into the treasury, whereas they had taken money out of it to procure His betrayal and death." The money Judas had so eagerly sought after now literally goes a-begging, and assists a beautiful charity, for it helps the purchase of "a burying place for strangers." How strangely does the blood of Christ work good to the dead after it has been an object of base traffic among the living.

Judas then went out and hanged himself, his suicide happening probably the very afternoon, certainly the same day, as our Redeemer's crucifixion.

The dreadful consequences following a man's sins are calculated to make him the sooner repent. But in Judas' case, when he realized what was to result from his betrayal of Jesus, instead of repenting, he despaired. Why did he not remember the goodness of Jesus to sinners, His patience even with himself? Why did he not recall that the Master had not expelled him from the apostleship, nor refused to wash his feet, nor denied him the kiss of peace in return for the kiss of hate? How could he think, how dared he think, that Jesus would not forgive him? But in the heart of Judas avarice found a faithful ally in pride. When the traitor sickened of love of money, a peculiar kind of self-love took possession of him. Judas had rated his Master's life at thirty pieces of silver, and now he rates his own power of wickedness higher than the Redeemer's power of pardoning.

It was fitting that such a monster should be his own executioner. He says in effect: My malice in sinning is mightier than God's goodness in showing mercy. Whoever says that is a doomed man. We dare not say that the despair of Judas was a greater sin than his treason; but it was the more fatal; it was the last.

Judas was a perfidious wretch without doubt. But he is a type of a multitude of sinners, and as such the Lord mourned over him bitterly; namely, those who either give up their religion or who otherwise violate their conscience for the sake of money. Many a one who abhors Judas would be shocked if he but sincerely asked himself whether he had never truckled in matters of conscience to

the power of money. Judas is also the archetype of all hypocrites, and his fate is a terrible warning to men and women who live outwardly as followers of Christ, and deal secretly with the evil one by a hidden course of wickedness.

Our Redeemer still continues to treat perfidy in us as He did in Judas, that is, with infinite patience and forbearance. Shall it not be with very different results? He has called me to His closest friendship, spoken affectionately to my heart every day by the inspirations of His grace; and by His holy sacrament He has given me better than His kiss of peace and pardon, He has given me His very self. Nay; He has already forgiven me not one but many betrayals. And yet I am what I am. Every Christian is a disciple of Jesus; what disciple can be against such a Master and not be a traitor?

Thus we must always return to the plainest lesson taught by the case of Judas, as it is the most affecting: That God treats His worst enemy, that is to say, a false friend, with forbearance even to the very end, regardless of the degree of turpitude or of any other aggravating circumstance whatsoever. Hereby the history of Judas is a lesson of hope for the devout friends of hardened sinners, for it proves fully how extremely reluctant Jesus is to condemn even the most desperate cases. Our Savior did for him enough to convert a very demon, hoping against hope to save him. And this was wholly characteristic of Jesus. His entire career was full of such things. If He would sit down to eat, His favorite company was publicans and sinners; then He would seek out with unwearying persistence, and be overjoyed at finding them. He "receiveth sinners," railed the Phari-

sees; and He associated with them to the scandal of both friends and foes, excused and defended them, loaded them with favors—and won them. And having done so, He paraded them as His dearest trophies. Finally He suffered and died for them and with them, and by the kind of death set apart for the most atrocious among them, being indistinguishable from malefactors in His most sacred hour and in the greatest act of His life, His crucifixion.

The loss of Judas after so many and such patient efforts was a great grief to Jesus. One of life's hardest pains is the sense of failure in earnest efforts to save those we love. Chagrin and disappointment are sore afflictions, and they are at their worst when sacrifices are totally unappreciated, tears wholly disregarded, heartaches not even adverted to. Parents can bear us witness here, for they often feel these pangs, perhaps the sharpest ever known to our human nature.

Jesus felt this agony for each of the lost, not one of whom but might be saved if he would respond to those interior influences of grace and those external providences of God which lead men to repentance. These are the embrace of Jesus and His kiss of forgiveness to perishing souls. And He felt the loss of His Apostle more acutely than that of any others of the reprobate. In the very midst of His sufferings for men's salvation, Jesus, in the case of Judas, met with His most conspicuous failure to win and save a sinner.

Judas' craft foiled the holy ingenuity of Christ's charity; his hardness of heart resisted the fire of even Jesus' love. And we believe that heaven alone will reveal to us how bitter was His disappointment. He had

failed to save a great sinner, one of His chosen band of associates, the sinner of all others nearest to Him, most subject to His saving powers, most needing salvation. He tried fear, He tried love; both failed upon Judas. After washing his feet in the supper-room, and first obscurely and then plainly offering pardon without success, Jesus still persisted—He kissed Judas and embraced him in the burning act of his betrayal, called him His friend, and whispered in his very ear an invitation to repent that should have melted him into tears; the memory of which should at least have saved him from suicide—would have saved him were he not Judas Iscariot. Judas he is and Judas he remains, finally and forever impenitent.

Oh, the might of sin! Oh, the endurance of love! Oh, true friendship, patient, generous, all-forgiving! O Jesus! friend of sinners, teach us the lesson of Thy mercy and of Judas' perversity!

PART III.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE.

CHAPTER I.

Jesus is Led Before Pontius Pilate.

And the whole multitude of them rising up, bound Jesus and led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate, the governor. Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the governor's hall. And it was morning; and they went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the pasch. Pilate, therefore, went out to them, and said: What accusation bring you against this Man? They answered and said to him: If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee. Pilate therefore said: Take Him you, and judge Him according to your law. The Jews therefore said to him: It is not lawful for us to put any man to death; that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He said, signifying the death He should die (Matt. xxvii. 2; Mark xv. 1; Luke xxiii. 1; John xviii. 28-32).

“When morning was come”—at dawn on Good Friday—sunset will see the dead body of Jesus delivered into the hands of His friends for burial, His soul into His Father's bosom, His sorrows over, His victory won.

The chief priests used every moment of daylight with eager haste. No need of messengers to reassemble the council; “Their feet are swift to shed blood” (Ps. xiii. 3). They met together at sunrise, and Jesus was immediately brought before them for the final and legal con-

clusion of the trial, His avowal of the divine Sonship once more drawn from His sorrowful but willing heart, and their sentence of the night before repeated with the necessary formality.

The effects of the maltreatment Jesus had undergone were plainly seen in the morning light, as He was dragged before the court—the features swollen, the eyes blackened, the hair and beard torn, and the spots and stains of the spittle as it was drying upon His face.

The chief priests, not knowing what resistance, and therefore delay, Pilate might make, would engage him in the case as early as possible. Another reason for haste was the need of cleansing the holy city of this culprit and His ugly case ere the beginning of the great Sabbath of the Passover that very evening. They would pass across the city, too, before the adherents of their prisoner could gather for a rescue, though Judas and Peter had shown them that they had little to fear on that ground. Yet they knew that Jesus was ever the people's friend, and as His coming into the city on Sunday had been a tumult of welcome, His going out on Friday might not so easily be made a tumult of condemnation. But "the whole multitude" of the servants and adherents of the priests and of the temple made a formidable body. These were ready at hand, having spent the night, some of them in tormenting Jesus, and the rest at and about Caiaphas' house, and they could gather many others of the same kind. So Jesus' bonds were quickly tightened, His guards carefully placed about Him, and He was hurried away to Pilate.

Weakened by a night of such suffering, He must have stumbled now and then, as they urged Him along the streets; but they would know how, by blows and curses,

to force Him forward. As the noise of this procession at so early an hour drew the people from their houses, the chief priests and their officials doubtless called out to them that this was a false prophet, leader of a desperate gang of rebels against their law and their temple, and that they had overpowered Him and were now going to have Pilate condemn Him to death. Who could contradict them? Who would recognize Jesus in the forlorn wretch they were dragging along with them?

Thus they "delivered Him to Pontius Pilate." They did so because they had no authority to execute a death sentence themselves. And they were glad that the Roman sentence of crucifixion, the most cruel and disgraceful known to a very cruel code, would be His fate—to not only kill Him, but to fatally dishonor His memory for all time was their purpose. But "they entered not the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled," that is, by communicating with heathens in their home. Upon this act of hypocrisy St. Augustine remarks: "O impious and foolish blindness! because, forsooth, they would be defiled by a dwelling which was another's, and not be defiled by a crime which was their own!" They at once petitioned Pilate for the death sentence. When he, naturally enough, asked to know the crime of the accused Man and the evidence against Him, they answered with much effrontery: "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee." He was to order Jesus executed on their bare statement of His guilt. Pilate answered: "Take Him you and judge Him."

This was Pilate's first false step. He should have demanded evidence of the prisoner's guilt and arranged for a fair, legal trial, keeping justice alone in view. His offer

to let the Jews kill Jesus, though they doubtless did not believe it sincere, and therefore not to be accepted, plainly betrayed to them Pilate's temporizing character, and encouraged them to bully him. Even if they thought that they would be really allowed to stone Jesus to death—their only legal form of execution—they would not avail themselves of the power to do so till they had quite failed to have Him crucified, the cruel and disgraceful torture for which they had destined Him. Furthermore, they wanted the prestige and protection of the Roman governor in the event of a popular reaction in favor of Jesus after His execution. For all these reasons they insisted on Pilate's making the case his own, and demanded his immediate sentence of death upon their victim.

Thus the trial of Jesus was begun by the chief priests forcing Him on Pilate. He, in turn, will strive to force Him on Herod, who, too cunning to involve himself in so dangerous a matter, will send Jesus back to Pilate. Then that unfaithful magistrate will spend the whole forenoon in shifts and expedients, now to be rid of Jesus at any cost, again to save Him from His ferocious enemies—anything to save himself from the stain of His blood. So did Judas strive to be freed from that stain, that spot of horror, delivering up his blood money to the men who gave it to him. The Jews alone were glad of that awful stain of Jesus' blood, both for themselves and for their children—and yet would have the Roman judge do their dreadful murder for them.

Pilate was, therefore, immediately impressed with the gravity of his position. He is likely to have already foreboded trouble, when the evening before he had consented to detail, at the request of the chief priests, so large

a force as a tribune's command; he must have known that it was to be used for apprehending a seditious Rabbi at the head of his adherents. And now he had before him this prisoner, totally different from an insurrectionist, evidently a peaceful, religious man, but accused vehemently by the principal men of the Jewish people, masters in all their most sacred life, the priests and doctors of the Hebrew faith and worship. He knew them well and disliked them. But their power was great; from them alone had he reason to dread any serious trouble in his jurisdiction.

He saw, too, that the ones to whom he might have looked for peaceable counsels, the usually pliant, accommodating Sadducees, were fierce enemies of Jesus, fairly raving against Him. Worse still, these had the Pharisees with them, leaders of the pious Israelites, now acting in unheard of harmony with the Sadducees, whom they cordially hated as heretics and traitors. They hated Jesus yet more bitterly, and yet Pilate knew from even a cursory examination that Jesus was totally innocent of any deed that the Roman authority could recognize as a crime. He would not have been himself had he looked with calmness and courage on this attempt to intimidate him into complicity in the execution of an innocent man.

So we have now followed our Redeemer to Pilate's hall, into another stage of His progress towards His death. "Lord, show me Thy ways, and teach me Thy paths" (Ps. xxiv. 4). Jesus, Thou art the best teacher men have ever known. But if Thou dost make me believe that Thy way to Pilate is a model for me to follow in my journeys, it will be an achievement worthy of even Thy fame.

From the time of His arrest to the end, Jesus made six journeys: from the Garden to the house of Annas, from there to the house of Caiaphas, thence to Pilate's court, from there to Herod, back again to Pilate, and finally to Calvary. Let us reverently kiss His footprints in all these weary ways, and let us drop our tears upon every step as we count them against our own steps in our goings and comings in search of sin. How loving and how sorrowful was He, while journeying onward towards our ransom, treading out beneath His feet the guilty tracks of our waywardness, as we have made haste to our pleasures.

Lord, "direct my steps according to Thy word" (Ps. cxviii. 133). From Thy first steps in infancy, till these Thy faltering steps in the weakness of approaching death, not one but was directed by love of me. Let all of mine after this be in the ways of Thy love and the paths of innocence and peace.

CHAPTER II.

Pilate Refuses to Condemn Jesus.

And they began to accuse Him, saying: We have found this Man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying, that He is Christ the King. Pilate therefore went into the hall again, and called Jesus, and said to Him: Art Thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered: Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of Me? Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? Thy own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered Thee up to me. What hast Thou done? Jesus answered: My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My Kingdom is not from hence. Pilate therefore said to Him: Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I might give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice. Pilate saith to Him: What is truth? And when he had said this, he went forth again to the Jews, and saith to them: I find no cause in Him. And the chief priests accused Him in many things. And when He was accused by the chief priests and ancients He answered nothing. Then Pilate saith to Him: Dost Thou not hear how great testimonies they allege against Thee? And He answered him to never a word, so that the Governor wondered exceedingly. And Pilate said to the chief priests and to the multitude: I find no cause in this Man. But they were the more earnest, saying: He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place (Matt. xxvii. 11-14; Mark xv. 2-5; Luke xxiii. 2-5; John xviii. 33-38).

Our Redeemer now heard Himself accused of sedition against Cæsar, of perverting the Jewish people from their religion, and of setting Himself up as their king. His heart sickened within Him at these accusations, so straight against the truth, urged with such fierce earnestness before that pagan court, and by the chief priests of God's people. The accusers, however, overshot the mark when they said He had excited popular commotions from Galilee to Jerusalem; half of all Israel could not be in disturbance and Pilate not know it. He at once set the charge aside. But he examined Jesus privately about His kingship; perhaps He was a rival of the Herods, for there was no lack of royal blood in Israel.

Our Redeemer pitied the governor most deeply, and He would help him to be true to his duty as a magistrate, so when Pilate asked him: "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered: "Sayest thou this of thyself, or have others told it to thee?" Pilate was irritated by the question, and he answered contemptuously: "Am I a Jew? Thy own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee up to me. What hast Thou done?" Upon which Jesus reverted to Pilate's original question: "Art thou the King of the Jews?" He answered in all candor that He was indeed a King, but added: "My Kingdom is not of this world;" as was indeed plain, from His total lack of subjects. But Master of men's hearts and minds for all light and love, that He at once claimed to be, and in words of kingly majesty: "For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I might give testimony to the truth." Mine is a spiritual supremacy, a majesty of instruction of men's souls, and of correction and example in all true life, and for all true men: "Every one

that is of the truth, heareth My voice." Pilate was in no mood for such thoughts, and put this wonderful answer aside by the disdainful exclamation: "What is truth?"

Pilate, thou mayest well ask that question, for thou wilt finally deliver up to death truth incarnate, at the demand of liars and perjurers. Durst thou hear what the truth is about thee? Thou art a craven-hearted judge.

"What is truth?" As if Jesus were some sort of philosopher, a speculator about curious questions. Pilate knew that this was an evasion, and therefore without waiting for an answer, he returned to his disputes with the clamoring priests and their followers. Why wait for an answer, anyway, from a teacher of truth without pupils, a Rabbi without a single adherent to stand up for him?

Brief as was this colloquy, it convinced Pilate that his prisoner, though shamefully deserted by His friends, was a man of much gravity of character, sincere and candid, and wholly innocent of the only charge his court had any right to consider, that of sedition. Did he have any suspicion of the supernatural character of Jesus? We have no means of knowing; but his subsequent conduct, and especially his distress at giving Him up to be crucified, show it possible that Pilate's pagan heart was moved by more than natural dread of the consequences of his cowardice.

Pilate was annoyed at Jesus for not setting up a regular defence against the Jews, and reproved Him for His persistent silence. But Jesus knew that any other course would, without helping His case, greatly increase their rage. He might have tried to strengthen Pilate by such arguments as these: This can only be the riotous tumult

of a faction; beware of the inevitable reaction from this delirium; five days ago the whole city acclaimed Me with hymns of worship. And I have thousands of friends, men wild and hot from Galilee and from everywhere else; they are now taken by surprise, but in a short while they will begin to assemble, perhaps with arms in their hands. Postpone the trial for only forty-eight hours, till after the Passover Sabbath; then in all tranquility bid my accusers call their witnesses—a rabble of perjurers you will find them to be. I claim only a fair and quiet trial, and that I claim in the name of justice, Hebrew as well as Roman.

No; there was not a word of all this from Jesus, but only the claim of His all-essential office of teacher of God's truth, King of heavenly wisdom in the realm of men's hearts. He made no complaint of the clamor of a mob, the untimely hour, the incoherent demands, the frantic haste, the bullying spirit—no; he would not confuse the great issue. It was no question of doing justice to an accused man, but rather of the fate of the Master of Divine Truth.

The chief priests were meanwhile much disturbed by this private conference between Jesus and the Roman. They dreaded the power of our Redeemer's words over Pilate. But if Jesus had not been able to soften their own hate, neither could He move Pilate's timidity. Yet their fears were justified to this extent that Pilate, while still holding Jesus in custody, concluded to refuse to condemn him to crucifixion or to any other capital punishment. Would that he had persevered in even this good resolve. He came forth and announced publicly: "I find no cause in this Man."

It is to be remarked that, whereas the Pharisees hated

Jesus because He taught against sedition, they now lent themselves to the charge that He had incited sedition, a charge made, too, by their traditional opponents, the Sadducean priests. Notice, besides, that no such accusation had been offered against Jesus in the court of Caiaphas. And we shall see later on that Barabbas, really guilty of murderous sedition, had the Sadducees for his friends, though submission to Rome was a prime rule of their party.

Truly did Satan so manage, that the most opposite vices, all fitly represented, should work together in strict alliance against our Redeemer. The prince of holy poverty is betrayed for love of money. The prince of peace is condemned for public brawling, and the prince of holy chastity, the virgin Son of a virgin mother, is mocked and scorned by gluttonous Herod, who is the prince of the foulest lechery. Jesus, the very type of meekness and forgiveness, is hounded to death by the Pharisees, the most arrogant of mankind and the most pitiless. Truly when I commit mortal sin I place myself in awful company. Every vice was recruited against Jesus in His passion, all were mobilized into furious activity, and all worked well together.

"A seditious person." Jesus was sensibly distressed by this charge. For never did any one hear Him speak twenty words, but that His soul was wrapt in the mantle of peaceful thoughts and gentle longing for virtue; unless that soul were totally perverse. Two effects were produced upon our Redeemer's auditors by His teaching, and these directly contrary to each other; in men of good will, peace of mind, gentle tears for sin, loving confidence in God's pardon, affectionate regard for one's neighbor;

in men of evil purposes, a sudden inward disturbance, a violent repression of better nature, a revolt against grace. "A troubled conscience always forecasteth grievous things" (Wisd. xvii. 10). Both Pharisees and Sadducees were of this latter class, and for directly opposite reasons. Jesus was thus certainly a disturber of the peace. Obdurate sinners were thrown into a ferment by His preaching and His example, none more so than those who, like the Pharisees, covered their villainy with a religious disguise. And in another way He raised disturbance; for He set men against each other whose union was the devil's truce with sin, but this sedition was the revolt of virtue against vice. The very struggles of the sinner's soul under the influence of Christ are peaceful. When the victory is won, and afterwards during all the years of perseverance in virtue, the sweetest memories are those of the agonies suffered at the time of repentance.

CHAPTER III.

Jesus Before Herod.

But they were the more earnest, saying: He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place. But Pilate, hearing Galilee, asked if the Man were of Galilee? And when he understood that He was of Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him away to Herod, who was also himself at Jerusalem in those days. And Herod seeing Jesus, was very glad; for he was desirous of a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to see some sign wrought by Him. And he questioned Him in many words. But He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood by, earnestly accusing Him. And Herod with his army set Him at nought, and mocked Him, putting on Him a white garment, and sent Him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate were made friends together, that same day; for before they were enemies one to another (Luke xxiii. 5-12).

Pilate hoped to be quit of Jesus by sending Him to Herod, because our Redeemer was that prince's subject as well as Pilate's, being a Galilean. And, furthermore, He claimed to be some sort of a king; perhaps Herod would settle the whole trouble by slaying Him as a rival. Yet Pilate did not force the judgment of Jesus on Herod, and he took care to send him a kindly message, leaving him free to retain Him and finish the case or to send Him back again. Herod was complimented by the Roman governor's action, which ended we know not what serious disagreement between them.

Jesus was, therefore, hurried away and presented before the murderer of John the Baptist (Mark vi. 28). Our Redeemer looked with pity upon this notorious creature, but when questioned by him, He preserved total silence. He did not anticipate a death-sentence from Herod, though He knew he had beheaded the Baptist to please a wanton woman, and that he might easily enough be provoked to kill the Baptist's venerated Master.

Herod, however, had no thought of shedding Jesus' blood, although His enemies earnestly accused him. His interest in anything but sensual pleasure was not great, and he knew Jesus claimed no sort of kingship that could interfere with his own authority. And, naturally cunning, he refused to be embroiled in the hot strife raging between Pilate and the chief priests.

But he had heard of Jesus' miracles, both from John and from common report. Here, thought he, is the arch-magician of the whole world, let us enjoy His wonder-working. About His miracles, therefore, he "questioned Him in many words," but he was answered by absolute silence.

Did he dare to ask Jesus about John the Baptist? The virtue of chastity? The day of judgment? Whether one can save his soul by cunning? Alas, no; or he would have won ready answers from Jesus. He asked only for miracles. The members of his court joined King Herod in this quest for the marvels of magic, the very men, probably, to whom he had served the head of the Baptist on a platter amid their lascivious feasting.

The king and his satellites were piqued at Jesus for His silence—He, a friendless wretch, nay, a man doomed to the cross, to stand motionless and calm and mute before

them. So they took a petty revenge upon Him; they derided Him and scoffed at Him, and finally wrapt Him in a white sheet as a fool's uniform, and in that garb sent Him back to Pilate, amid the loud jeers of the chief priests and their followers.

That garment, Jesus felt, was the sort of royal robe one might well wear if He would aspire to be King of our foolish race—but it pained Him deeply all the same. The insulting questions of the king and his court, the furious accusations of the Jews, the folding Him in that garment of derision, all was exquisitely painful. Yet meanwhile He knew that the principal scene of His woes was the Roman court, and the final decision of His fate must be not with Herod and his flatterers, but with Pilate and the chief priests.

And now the expectant crowd outside Herod's dwelling see Jesus flung out among them clothed in a white garment, amid roars of laughter from the king's courtiers. O God, grant us to know the heart of Jesus that hour!

We can easily imagine how He must have suffered in his journeys between the Roman coward and the half-pagan Jewish prince. The guards and the rabble can fling mud on Him and strike Him with impunity, and they can stab Him with their blasphemous tongues at every step. May all that they do and say increase our love and veneration for Him.

One solace He had. "Herod and Pilate were made friends together that same day." He could not save either of them. But He served the public peace by allaying discord between its two principal guardians. We remember that when He worked the great miracle of the loaves and fishes, He did not allow even the fragments to

be wasted. In His great work of atonement, this little boon to His country, the reconciliation of Pilate and Herod, was gladly given.

The episode of Jesus standing in Herod's court adds a peculiar pain to our thoughts about the passion. O Jesus, Thou hast committed Thy fate to the worst men in the whole world: Jews wrought up to the very insanity of hate; a Roman ruler quailing before them; a licentious and murderous Oriental prince—among all these art Thou placed, and to their will art Thou abandoned, for our sakes and for our salvation; thus it is that Thou dost establish justice and purity and mercy among men.

But is it not *really* foolish to allow oneself to go to shame and death without defence? So the world thinks. But, "let no man deceive himself; if any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (I. Cor. iii. 18). And again the Apostle exclaims: "We are fools for Christ's sake" (I. Cor. iv. 10). Is it not foolish to give up one's rights for the sake of peace? To secretly pay an enemy's debt? To recompense evil with good? To prefer future happiness to present happiness? And these foolish ways of acting are the choice maxims of the Gospel. And how foolish to say, Blessed are the poor, and they that mourn, and they that are persecuted. These are the very beatitudes of our Sufferer in Herod's court. To answer insult with gentle silence is Christian wisdom. And to meet force with patient suffering is divinely wise. Let us adore this wisdom of God, and imitate it as practiced by our Redeemer, each one of us according to his opportunities and inspirations.

But for this a very earnest spirit is necessary; our hearts are not easily bent to forego defending our good

name, which indeed is usually to be guarded with care. But occasionally it must be risked or even forfeited for God's good pleasure and our neighbor's welfare. To meet such emergencies we must be prepared with a plentiful store of self-denial and humility. The spectacle of Jesus before Herod, mocked and despised, should therefore never fade from our minds. The day is sure to come when each one of us shall need grace to be silent and submissive under the accusation, or at least the insinuation, of being a fool.

Herod had been "desirous of a long time" to see Jesus. Oh, how many guileless souls, very different from Herod, yearn for many years after Jesus, His truth, His love, often without knowing whom and what they are craving for.

Jesus, Thou art indeed the wonder of the world; I long to see Thee, I hope to see "some sign wrought" by Thee; namely, the miracle of the healing of my soul. To behold this marvel I have a devouring curiosity. At such times as confession and Communion this is gratified for a moment. Oh, how happy a moment! Extend and diffuse that moment over my whole life,

CHAPTER IV.

Barabbas is Preferred to Jesus.

And Pilate, calling together the chief priests and the magistrates and the people, said to them: You have presented unto me this Man as one that perverteth the people; and behold I, having examined Him before you, find no cause in this Man, in those things wherein you accuse Him; no, nor Herod neither; for I sent you to him, and behold, nothing worthy of death is done to Him. I will chastise Him, therefore, and release Him. Now upon the solemn day the governor was accustomed to release to the people one prisoner, whom they would. And he had then a notorious prisoner, that was called Barabbas, who was put in prison with some seditious men, who in the sedition had committed murder. And when the multitude was come up, they began to desire that he would do as he had ever done unto them. They therefore being gathered together, Pilate said: Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him up out of envy. And as he was sitting in the place of judgment, his wife sent to him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him. But the chief priests and ancients persuaded the people, that they should ask Barabbas, and make Jesus away. And the Governor answering, said to them: Whether will you of the two to be released unto you? But the whole multitude together cried out, saying: Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas. And Barabbas was a robber. And Pilate again spoke to them, desiring to release Jesus: What will you then that I do to the King of the Jews—Jesus that is called Christ? But they all cried again, saying: Crucify Him, crucify Him. And Pilate said to them the third time: Why, what evil hath this Man done? I find no cause of death in Him; I will

chastise Him, therefore, and let Him go. But they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified, and their voices prevailed. And Pilate, seeing that he prevailed nothing, but rather that a tumult was made, taking water, washed his hands before the people, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just Man; look you to it. And the whole people answering, said: His blood be upon us and upon our children. So Pilate, being willing to satisfy the people, gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them Barabbas—him who for murder and sedition in the city had been cast into prison, whom they had desired (Matt. xxvii. 15-18, 20-26; Mark xv. 6-15; Luke xxiii. 13-25; John xviii. 39, 40).

Pilate had hoped that Herod would relieve him of Jesus, and was doubtless sorry to have Him back again to dispose of, with the chief priests clamoring louder than ever for the death-sentence. Pilate was loth to yield to them, and he repeated his decision: "I find no cause in Him," quoting Herod against them. But he immediately added: "I will chastise Him, therefore, and release Him"—a fatal self-contradiction which did not escape the eager attention of the Jews.

It would seem that just at this moment Pilate was interrupted by a petition to release a notorious prisoner, an insurgent, a robber, and a murderer, named Barabbas. This was according to a custom at the Passover, the choice of the fortunate culprit being left to a sort of popular vote. It immediately occurred to Pilate that our Savior might have friends enough to make a plea for His release, in preference to so vile and blood-stained a wretch as Barabbas. He hoped to divide the votes of the multitude and then to decide in favor of Jesus. The poor, cowardly judge; if he could get that encouragement he thought he might stand his ground. He, therefore, of-

ferred the people their choice between "Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ, the King of the Jews."

But for some reason unknown to us—unless it be the message of his wife about her dream—he delayed pressing the matter to a conclusion, and the interval was well used by the chief priests. Playing the part of demagogues they cajoled and threatened "the multitude," which was, besides, made up in great part of their own adherents. When the governor again demanded their choice of a prisoner to be pardoned, "the whole multitude together cried out, saying: Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas." Pilate pleaded further with them, but in vain. "What will you then that I do to Jesus that is called Christ?" he demanded. "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" shouted that dreadful mob; and when he a third time appealed to them, "they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified." Pilate gave up, as was to be expected.

Then he made a pitiable show of himself, by publicly washing his hands, and exclaiming: "I am innocent of the blood of this just Man; look you to it." An appalling answer was returned: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." And it was the whole assemblage of the Jews, from the high priests and doctors of Israel down to the street rabble of Jerusalem that uttered this most historical of all imprecations, and the one most awfully fulfilled.

The cry for blood must have been a roar—"the whole multitude together cried out." Oh, how sad this was to Jesus. He loved the multitude most devotedly, being one of the working people Himself, and thoroughly identified with the average humanity of our race. And He had won

the common people's hearts; the whole world had run after Him (John xii. 19); they had thronged and pressed upon Him so that He must preach from a hillside, or from a boat at the lake shore, His heart always yearning for the masses. "I have pity on the multitude" (Matt. xv. 32), He once exclaimed, and this was to proclaim His characteristic virtue. "And seeing the multitudes, He was moved with compassion" (Matt. ix. 36), which might truly be called His invariable state of mind.

And now the multitude, seeing Him, are beside themselves with rage against Him; and this, He felt, would break His heart, but that He knew of another multitude, His own, and one that was faithful in spirit, though timid in act. We shall see that "there followed Him a great multitude of people and of women," as He started toward Calvary laden with His cross. And again, after His death: "All the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts."

Pilate, meanwhile, was a pitiable spectacle of vacillation. He struggled by turns with conscience and with fear of the Jews—"seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made." I had rather, as if to say, protect this innocent Man, if I could; but I cannot do it without risk of a revolt. I must murder Him, therefore, to avoid a public tumult. This is what weak men call a choice of evils, many a time alleged as an excuse for gross infidelity to trust. Why did he not say: I am not to blame if a tumult is made, but I am to blame if an innocent Man in my custody suffers harm. Tumult or no tumult, I will do my duty; He shall not be taken from my protection to be murdered by His enemies, least of all shall they engage me as an accomplice in so horrible a crime.

No. But, "being willing to satisfy the people," Pilate released Barabbas and ordered Jesus to be scourged, the legal preliminary to execution. O Jesus, thy fate is sealed! Look, O Redeemer of my soul, upon Pontius Pilate washing his hands after condemning Thee to death, and saying: "I am innocent of the blood of this just Man," and impart to me some of Thy own feelings of grief, some of Thy own fortitude in bearing my sins and those of the whole world.

Pilate's ceremony of hand washing may have had a soothing effect on his guilty conscience. It had none upon the Jews, who were not grateful for his willingness to deliver Christ up to them, but rather enraged that he had not done it sooner—not the kind of men to be grateful for anything, claiming all things and yielding nothing. It had no effect in the eyes of God, whose kingdom consists not in washing the hands, but in purifying the heart.

Guilt of soul, O Pontius Pilate, is not cleansed by washing of hands, but by interior washings of sorrow, with true purpose of amendment. Why dost thou not wash thy court clean of this filthy mob by turning thy soldiers upon them? Why not insist, at least, upon a postponement of these proceedings, so headlong, so passionate? Because thou art an officer without courage and a magistrate without integrity. Wash that just Man's blood off thy soul if thou canst, after delivering Him up, all innocent and helpless, to His enemies.

But Pilate is not the only one who has trusted to outward observances rather than to the inward spirit for his justification. And as he blamed the Jews for his own criminal neglect of justice, so many another sinner blames the devil, bad companions, or fierceness of temptation.

when his own heart is the sole culprit. Yet again, men are apt to excuse sins done under pressure of circumstances, or from weakness and procrastination, as less wicked than those committed with more positive and original purpose. Pilate's case is very apt for their instruction.

Thus was Barabbas preferred to Jesus. The robber and murderer had friends, staunch and true, who watched their chance to save him, and succeeded. And where were the friends of Jesus? Sunday last was a day full of hosannas for Him from the lips of thousands; is there not any echo of them this succeeding Friday? Has the whole tide of popular favor ebbed away from Jesus forever?

The paschal privilege of amnesty for a prisoner was a God-sent opportunity. Pilate hailed it as a way of escape for his poor captive. The chief priests dreaded it—it threatened a sudden collapse of this bloodthirsty scheme against Jesus. Where are His friends? Alas! He had positively none to speak for Him, except miserable Pilate and his dreaming wife. He alone speaks for Jesus, and says: This Man is innocent, and if he were guilty, He is better than Barabbas, a robber and a murderer. And the awful answer is: No; we are the priesthood and the people of God, and we proclaim that He is guilty. With all our might, and before high heaven, and all unanimously, we proclaim that a robber and a murderer is a better man than Jesus Christ. Away with Him to the gallows!

This seems perfectly monstrous—that even the worst men, having Jesus and Barabbas to choose between, should prefer this loathsome murderer to so benignant and all-beautiful a being as Jesus. But let the Christian

ask himself in all sincerity: What did I do when I committed mortal sin? Whom did I prefer before Jesus? Let me, indeed, condemn the "whole multitude" of the Jews for their perfidy, but let me not fail to be equally just in condemning myself.

The most conspicuous figures associated with our Redeemer in His sufferings are three robbers. Two infamous criminals are placed on an equal footing with Him on Calvary, sharing the crucifixion. The third, Barabbas, confessedly guilty of one of the accusations against Jesus, namely, public sedition, happens very strangely to be brought into rivalry with Him for the favor of the people—and wins the prize from Him.

When Jesus heard that cry: Not this man, but Barabbas! Oh, with what agony must He not have turned from men to God! Do thou the same, my soul, when thou art abandoned by men. And be prepared to do so even in the sunshine of their favor; remember Barabbas.

What a humiliation for Jesus—to be publicly rated the inferior of a robber and a murderer. Could a more agonizing sense of degradation be thought of than His, as the "whole multitude together cried out: Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas"? What shame, what chagrin were His. Yet the lesson taught repentant sinners is most consoling. He was not only glad that this poor wretch was saved from death by means of His own condemnation, but the event was typical of His highest preference. There is no exchange of Himself Jesus has not made for hardened sinners. "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" He had solemnly asked on one occasion (Matt. xvi. 26). In exchange for not His own but His enemy's soul, the Son of God will give His very

life, and, what is of higher value, His good repute among His best-loved people.

As the shout went up that preferred Barabbas to Him, Jesus, with all His pain of heart, mentally joined in it. I, too, prefer Barabbas. I prefer any and every sinner to Myself—his good name to My good name, his life to My life. Let Me be disgraced, that the worst sinner may be honored forever; let Me die as a malefactor, that the cruellest brute of a man that ever lived may die amid angels and be borne by them to celestial bliss.

In the eyes of Jesus Barabbas stood for all mankind. I am glad to release him and to take upon Me his crimes, He felt. Go thou free, O Barabbas, I strike the fetters from thy limbs, I blot out thy name from the list of the condemned. More than that, I will change thy sinful heart to penance and to love. I will open the heavens to thy immortal soul.

What now is sorrow to Jesus is gladness to Barabbas, and that is soothing to our Redeemer's heart—a heart that in these dire events never faltered in its love for all, the chief priests, "the whole multitude" of his countrymen, Pilate, Herod, His hidden, cowering Apostles, Barabbas. I am glad, Jesus would say, that among the first for whom My death is the boon of life, is an extremely atrocious sinner, a seditious man, a robber and a murderer. To save such especially am I glad to die.

We think, too, that later on Jesus must have granted Barabbas the infinite boon of His faith and grace, as the final result of this strange rivalry between them. Would not Barabbas naturally have attended the crucifixion?—and have been surely one of those who went back beating their breasts and saying, "Indeed this was the Son of God." When our Redeemer had healed diseases, did He

not couple with the bodily miracle the inner gift of pardon and peace? So, with Barabbas' earthly life, Jesus must have granted him eternal life.

It remains to say a word of the singular message of Pilate's wife: "Have thou nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." She does not advise her husband simply to be quit of Jesus, least of all to give Him up to His enemies. No; for she calls him a "just Man," and she undoubtedly desired His release. This woman's voice, then, secret and panic-stricken, was the only one Pilate heard on Jesus' side in the whole trial. Doubtless it annoyed Pilate. He would answer: What is this case to thee, a Roman woman and a worshipper of idols? Why shouldst thou meddle in this matter, embarrassing enough to me already? Have you ever seen this Man? What do you know about Him?

She was doubtless a devout-minded woman, perhaps a Jewish proselyte. Perhaps she had seen and heard Jesus in some of His public discourses. She had kept herself informed of all the steps of this process. Her servants were, in part at least, Hebrew women, and what Hebrew woman was not Jesus' friend and adherent. God sent her a terrible dream the night before. Perhaps it was the events happening in Caiaphas' house that were acted in her soul by some terrible imagery, and she saw those wretches spitting in Jesus' face and brutally striking Him, heard their ribald laughter and their mocking, and was told by God that this Man was His only-begotten Son. Some way or other she had been warned, and she knew it was for her husband's sake; and if in vain for him, let us hope not in vain for herself.

CHAPTER V.

Jesus is Scourged.

And Pilate said to them . . . I find no cause in this Man; in those things wherein you accuse Him; . . . I will chastise Him, therefore, and let Him go. So Pilate, being willing to satisfy the people, when he had scourged Him, delivered [Him] up to their will to be crucified (Matt. xxvii. 26; Mark xv. 15; Luke xxiii. 13, 15, 16; John xix. 1).

When Pilate announced: "I find no cause in this Man," it sounded like a decisive acquittal of Jesus. But the craven heart is revealed in the words which follow: "I will chastise Him, therefore, and let Him go." Pilate hoped to get rid of the Jews by part payment of their unjust demand, as travelers would act with highwaymen. But this only encouraged them to demand all, which he finally yielded to them.

Scourging has always been typical of wrath. The scourges of the divine wrath mean God's most terrible chastisements. Nations are scourged with a pestilence and war. A relentless, barbarous conqueror, like Attila the Hun, is called the scourge of God. The wrath of Rome was well shown in the cruelty of her scourging, for it was a punishment, like crucifixion, reserved only for slaves and barbarians (Acts xvi. 37). Jesus was to feel the full weight of this punishment. It was different from the merciful punishment of the Mosaic law, limited to forty stripes save one. It was a brutal flogging,

unlimited both in the number and the severity of the stripes inflicted.

Pilate's purpose was to excite the commiseration of the Jews by the spectacle of Christ's condition after this torture, and thereby induce them to accept scourging in place of crucifixion. He might have succeeded with less bloodthirsty natures, for we learn from the authentic records of the martyrs in three succeeding centuries that many of them died under this punishment. The weapon itself varied, being sometimes leathern thongs, sometimes cords armed with leaden balls, sometimes long, thin rods.

Seldom do we meet with men who positively delight in inflicting agony on other men, or who enjoy human torture for its own sake. Jesus met them that day; they were the governor's soldiers, Roman legionaries, machines for human slaughter rather than men, whose trade—nay, whose amusement—was cruelty to their fellow-men. They knew little of Jesus, except that He claimed to be a king. But there He was in their hands, and they were going to enjoy scourging Him. As they enjoyed pillage and rapine, so they enjoyed mocking at a writhing and dying wretch. History in a thousand places bears witness to this trait in the Roman soldier of our Redeemer's time. They must have said to one another: Here is a fellow who has set up to be a king against our Cæsar—Jesus of Nazareth, sham king of the Jews. Let us cut Him deep; let us see how His Majesty will stand it. And so behind their whips was their scorn and their rage.

This is one reason why the soldiers were especially cruel to Him. But when were executioners ever known to be anything else? Besides, if the chief priests were so per-

sistent in goading Pilate on to crucify Jesus, they would not fail to stimulate the soldiers to cruelty in flogging Him, and gladly would they pay them for it. The soldiers, therefore, looked at Jesus, as he was handed over to them, with anticipations of pleasure; and He looked at them with forgiving glances. He took off His clothes, unveiling His virginal body in their sight, offering to His Father and to us, His brethren, the sacred flesh now to be torn and the precious blood now to be shed for our sins. He reaches out His hands, and He is quickly tied to the whipping post. He is tied fast and firm, so that in case He shall faint He may not fall to the ground.

He needs not to be tied. Or rather, He is already tied by cords of affection, stronger than iron, bound to us and to our eternal welfare, a veritable whipping post of every pain. He will neither faint under the strokes nor lift a finger to escape. No, nor utter a groan. But the secret voice of His soul keeps time to the blows as they fall on Him. The soldiers may fix their own number of cruel stripes and He is agreed; they may cut to the bone, and in His heart He says: Cut deeper, for every blow you strike resounds in My Father's court and pleads for the pardon of those I love.

We know not how many stripes He received; this we know: He would have chosen to have one given for every sin that we, His brethren, have committed, if He could have borne them all and have lived. Nor do we know how long they spent in flogging Jesus; but although it seemed an age to Him, their poor, quivering victim, He yet patiently endured it.

As steel strikes fire out of flint, so did the whips start the fire of love from Jesus' heart. The harder they

struck Him the more He loved them, and loved all sinners, in whose stead they dealt their dreadful blows; He answered the whips with darts of love.

A single cut of a common whip, laid fiercely upon a man's bare skin, would burn like fire and raise a livid welt; but these were no ordinary whips, but executioners' scourges. And the scourging of Jesus was a sort of universal bodily torment; His whole frame was laid bare for the soldiers' strokes; they could, if they wished, strike every limb, and doubtless they did so. He shed more blood now than at any other time in His Passion—a pitiable figure at the end of it, wholly bathed in blood, each drop gladly, but, oh, most painfully, offered up for us from His heart of hearts.

There is no record of any indication of pain on His part. We know not if He stood firm as a rock; perhaps so. But perhaps, also, He shrank into Himself as the repeated blows, delivered, we may surmise, by more than one executioner at the same time, began to curl and tear His skin and flesh, and at every fast repeated stroke shocked His whole nervous system. As to His thoughts, some form of love always held paramount place in His soul. Here, we may fancy, besides His thoughts about the impurity of men, which damns so many souls, our Lord was mindful of the innumerable martyrs, who, He foreknew, would be flogged to the verge of death, and some unto death itself, for His Name's sake in the first ages of the Church. How tender a sympathy He must have felt for them during His scourging. The scourging at the pillar is one of the great events in our Lord's Passion. Now, for the first time, His precious blood flows very copiously; now, for the first time also, bodily agony

is great enough to threaten death—His Father's final purpose may at any moment be consummated by His death, perhaps would have been during the scourging but for a miracle. The executioners stop in time, however, to save life in their victim, and they untie His hands. The drooping form is set free. But he feels the awful ordeal He has passed through; and His weakness alarms Him. I am almost dead, He must have gasped to Himself. As He staggers to His poor garments to cover His naked and lacerated body, He steps in His own blood, and He sees His blood spattered on the faces and clothes of the soldiers; He prays that it may yet cleanse their souls from sin. But they did not return Him as yet to Pilate. They, whose very sport is in cruelty, reserve Him for a scene of mockery. Nor have we any reason to suppose that they cleansed Him, even roughly, from his blood or staunched His wounds, before he put on His clothes.

Some very obvious lessons are taught us by our Redeemer's scourging. Consider that in this suffering He was atoning particularly for sins of impurity, and that He offered to His Father the shame of being stripped naked and flogged, in atonement for the shameless lust of those He loved. As the lashings of the whips cut Him, he thought of their souls as they shall stand naked before God at the moment of death to answer for their sensual vices. "By His stripes you are healed" (I. Peter ii. 24), says the Apostle. Thus God's justice—how keenly did Jesus feel it—scourged Him in our stead. The soldiers lashed His body with their whips, the Jews lashed His soul with their tongues, and every sinner lashed Him with his sins.

Here, furthermore, we are taught the virtue of bodily

self-denial. Let no Christian who has studied Christ's scourging at the pillar ever again pamper his miserable flesh. Let each of us be able to say with St Paul: "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection" (I. Cor. ix. 27), and continually practice at least some little acts of bodily self-denial, not only by way of penance, but to show our sympathy with our Redeemer's passion.

O Jesus, if Thy blood is rightly called Most Precious, then it can purchase me a keepsake from Thee—one of the scourges which drew from Thy sacred body that blood which all reverently I adore. I would hang that relic in my soul's most sacred shrine, and would, at least now and then, use it courageously upon myself to reduce my animal passions into obedience to reason, and reason, in turn, into subjection to the maxims of Thy Gospel.

CHAPTER VI.

'Jesus is Crowned with Thorns.

Then the soldiers of the governor, taking Jesus into the court of the palace, gathered together unto Him the whole band; and stripping Him, they clothe Him with a scarlet cloak, and plating a crown of thorns they put it upon His head (Matt. xxvii. 27-29; Mark xv. 16, 17; John xix. 2).

After the scourging the soldiers were weary of cruelty—so one would think. But they turned from laborious cruelty to an easier and more enjoyable kind. They send out to a hedge nearby for some twigs of thorn, and twist them into a circle; then, at their command, Jesus strips Himself again, is clothed in a cast-off soldier's cloak, and they then crown Him with this crown of thorns, forcing it down into His scalp and entangling it in His hair. This was a new diversion for them, a new and excessively painful torture for Him.

The special purpose they had in view was to inflict a peculiar and appropriate humiliation on Him as a pretended king. Scourging, thought they, is good enough, but it is not the most fitting punishment for a false king. He who is caught wearing a stolen crown should be forced to wear a painful one. And now above His tearful eyes they set the crown of thorns, and upon His fair and open brow they crush it down with rough brutality.

In the long chronicle of the triumphs of victors over the vanquished, including many derisive crownings of captured kings, this coronation of the immortal king of the ages with a crown of thorns is unique—an original

inspiration of contempt for Jesus, king of the Jews. But we know not if He were more content with any of His sorrows than He was with this diadem of shame. For, hardly excepting the crucifixion itself, this crowning expresses more plainly than any of His outward inflictions His interior sense of shame for our sins.

And men's placing it on His head shows most plainly their interior contempt for His divine sovereignty. The sin-infected earth brought forth thorns and briars; sinners, more savage than the earth, now crown their monarch with their sharpest insult. Hence, in our penitential meditations, we should be deeply moved by this sacred symbol of mock honor and shameful glory for our rightful sovereign. When I am tempted to browbeat my neighbor, let me look upon Jesus' brow, and I remember His words: "The princes of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they that are the greater, exercise power over them. It shall not be so among you. . . . He that shall be first among you shall be your servant" (Matt. xx. 25-27).

Next to the cross itself all Christian generations have venerated this coronet of mockery with tenderest love. And the honors of this world lose much of their attraction when we behold Jesus wrapped in a torn scarlet cloak, crowned with thorns, enthroned amid our scoffing and blaspheming representatives. We love His crown because it so plainly tells that the chief glory of every Christian, after obtaining forgiveness of his own sins, is to bear the shame of his neighbor's sins. For Jesus never felt so truly a king as when arrayed in this royal insignia of sovereignty over His outlawed and disinherited brethren.

The last ignominy of a criminal is to be branded on his very forehead with a fiery and eternal mark of shame, and this day in paradise, around our Redeemer's royal brow, is a circle of scars; and his chosen crown of immortal honor is that He bore the shame of our sins and therein has the glory of our salvation for all eternity.

"The head," says Father Thomas of Jesus, "is the part by which men are known, where the face is, where all the senses meet, as also the organs of life and conversation, and all beauty and deformity; wherein appear joy and sorrow, bravery and fear, health and sickness, and all the sentiments of the soul. It is that part, O Lord, which thou didst suffer to be pierced with thorns and stained with blood, and thus it was Thy choice to be distinguished, O thou most beautiful among the children of men, most lovable spouse of my soul. It is by such signs as thorns and blood that Thou wouldst make me comprehend what passes in Thy heart, the love with which it burns, and the zeal it has for my salvation and perfection. And, oh, how much more deeply does that blood which flows upon Thy face, that head pierced with thorns, affect the hearts of those who are touched with Thy love, than if it shone with precious stones. The riches and crowns of the earth can give nothing but what they have, that is, earthly advantages; but Thy pains and thorns fill the soul with heavenly sweetness, load it with spiritual riches, and fix it to Thee by the loyalty of a love which is above all imagination."

The face of a candid man is the true expression of his soul. It pleased our Redeemer to be derided and mocked in His head and face, that we might read His mind as in an open book. His mind reads thus: The virtue of

humility is the Christian's crown. And also thus: Shame and sorrow for another's sins is a privilege a crowned monarch might envy. And again: Only when a man suffers out of love for an unworthy fellow-man is he really a prince in Christ's kingdom, especially if that suffering is a shameful one.

Thus was Jesus crowned the leading criminal in the whole world and the king of all sinners. His coronation has been the incentive to countless splendid victories over pride, the vice which is the living root of all sin. As the cross of Christ is an incentive to bodily suffering for the sake of others, so does His crown of thorns lead us to be subject to others in all humility. Both cross and crown He committed to us as His special tokens, the one of self-sacrifice, the other of self-abasement. The very word crown means rule; not so among Christ's followers, but rather submission for Christ's sake to all our brethren.

CHAPTER VII.

Jesus is Mocked by Pilate's Soldiers.

Then the soldiers of the governor, taking Jesus into the court of the palace, gathered together unto Him the whole band, and stripping Him, they clothe Him with a scarlet cloak. And plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And bowing the knee before Him, they began to salute Him; they mocked Him, saying: Hail! King of the Jews. And spitting upon Him, they took the reed, and gave Him blows and struck His head; and bowing their knees they worshipped Him (Matt. xxvii. 27-30; Mark xv. 16-19; John xix. 2, 3).

After the scourging of Jesus, and between His crowning and the final sentence of death, there was evidently some interval of time. This was purposely left by Pilate, beating about in his mind, perhaps, for yet some other way of saving our Redeemer without antagonizing the Jews; or, if he had no such hopes, then he was waiting for the framing of the now inevitable cross. At any rate, the delay was dreadfully employed by the enemies of the Lord. The soldiers had got but a partial gratification of their spiteful feelings, as we have seen, by the scourging of Jesus. Let us trick Him out, said they, with a royal robe. Where they got the ragged purple garment for our Redeemer's coronation we know not; sorry enough it must have been, for they knew it would be smeared with blood and entirely spoiled. Their barracks must have been near, a worn out and cast off soldier's cloak could easily be found there; thus it is commonly surmised. A cheap walking stick for a sceptre, perhaps only a stalk of flag weed, finished the royal furnishings of the King of

Kings; they fixed it in His right hand, which was bound by the wrists firmly to His left.

The soldiers were beside themselves with delight at this spectacle. They bent the knee in mockery before Jesus, this preposterous creature, this mock king with tearful eyes, fainting form, ragged robes, and pale and downcast face. How loud they laughed at Him; how they spat in His face and struck it and slapped it. They called in their whole guard to join in this sport. It occupied all the time till the last moments of His trial; it is thus that He was rested for His journey to Calvary and for the suffering of the awful doom that there awaited Him.

The maltreatment of Jesus the night before at the hands of Caiaphas' servants, was thus repeated in Pilate's palace by "the whole band" of the Roman soldiers. Then it had been His religious claims that were blasphemed, being mocked by the Jews as a false prophet; now it is His claim to be king that excites the derision and contempt of pagan Gentiles. One exclaims: I bow my knee to Thee, O king—and I spit in Thy face! Another says: I crown Thee as my king—with thorns, and I beat Thee with Thy own sceptre! And another: I proclaim Thee my king, all hail!—and take this blow in the face as my payment of tribute!

There sat Jesus among them, entirely defenceless, perfectly submissive, kind in His looks as in His heart's deepest depths, silent and forgiving; waiting and longing for the end, but not impatiently. Contrast His heart with theirs; and that gentle, patient face with their scowling visages. Their inventing new insults, new torments, but gives Him power to bestow new blessings upon them and us. Little did they know the royal riches and royal gen-

erosity of their mock king's heart. How could they? As already said—and it is the explanation of their cruelty—they belonged to a class of men little above the brutes, whose sweetest amusement is torturing other men.

And by suffering at their hands Jesus merited for His Church one of her dearest privileges, her power for good over very brutalized men—cannibal savages and the most degraded creatures of the city slums. Such as these are her favorite flock. Her priests have miraculous graces to convert men in the condemned cells of penitentiaries. Read the history of the martyrs, and mark how often their executioners, who began by actually enjoying their awful task of torturing helpless Christians, ended by becoming gentle-hearted Christians themselves, and even martyrs in their turn. The fickleness of royal favor has passed into a proverb. But the favor of our King is as lasting as it is generous, and it is best shown by His steadfast affection for the worst classes of mankind.

O Jesus, crowned with thorns, enrobed in a soldier's cast-off rags, sceptred with a reed, receive my promise of humility as I bend my knee before Thee and adore Thee. I will never again lord it over my fellows. This spectacle, before which I bow in unfeigned reverence, shall never fade from my mind—a mind so opinionated and arrogant, so ready to contradict and so resentful of contradiction from others; here is Thy cure of all pride of opinion, all bullying mannerisms.

Bring in the whole band of the human race, from earth and heaven and hell, and let every knee of them all bend down in lowly adoration before Jesus mocked in Pilate's hall. Let every tongue proclaim that meekness is the royal virtue and patience the royal glory of the subjects of Jesus, the King of Kings (Phil. ii. 10).

How good it is to serve Jesus as our King. In His court all are ennobled, not with the gift of perishable riches or empty titles, but with miraculous power of loving God and man, with holy desires to do good to all, with the supremacy of reason over brutish appetites and of brotherly love over all selfishness. In His court each one is admitted to the King's intimate friendship. Upon each soul is poured out an influence of holy love, changing his very nature into God's own, making his innermost thoughts Christ's own affections, making the blood royal of divine love the common heritage of all.

What was mockery on the soldiers' lips that day, is now holiest sincerity on ours. O Jesus, "Thou art my King and my God" (Ps. xliii. 5). He earned the joy of hearing this, our heartfelt salutation, by patiently submitting to that malignant mockery. He reigns in our hearts and in our lives, because He was content to be totally abased for our sins. "The Lord shall reign forever, thy God, O Zion, unto generation and generation" (Ps. cxlv. 10). Hail, King of the Jews! To Jesus, "the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (I. Tim. i. 17).

Thou art the gentle monarch of all earth and heaven, our only Master and our only King. Reign supreme in our lives, especially in our thoughts and affections. Thy reign is heavenly peace, Thy law is perfect love. May Thy kingdom come into every soul, every family, every nation. Other kings have before now reigned in my heart—malignant pride, degrading sensuality; they were usurpers and tyrants. Their victories were my enslavement, their gifts were my ruin. But I have expelled them all and they are gone forever, and Thou alone shalt reign in me. Hail, Jesus, my King and my God!

CHAPTER VIII.

Behold the Man.

Pilate, therefore, went forth again, and saith to them: Behold, I bring Him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in Him. (Jesus therefore came forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment.) And he saith to them: Behold the Man! (John xix. 4, 5.)

When the governor called for the return of Jesus he was struck with horror at the sight of that crowned, robed, and sceptred figure. The cloak had been thrown about His nearly naked body and fastened at the throat; it only partially covered His wounded and blood-streaked form, showing His bare bosom and manacled hands, the right one holding the reed. Pilate thought that the Jews, at least some of them, would be moved with pity at this spectacle, and that they might at last respond to his plea for our Redeemer's release; if he, a pagan, were shocked at such a sight, why not many of the Jews?

So thought Pilate. "I find no cause in Him!" he cried; and leading Jesus forward till all could see Him, he called out in a loud voice. "Behold the Man!" As if to say: Is not this enough? Behold your victory, look at your conquered enemy. Is not this degradation enough for Him?—triumph enough for you? If you have hearts of stone, they should melt at this sight. Go on to the rest of your purpose if you dare—if you are wild beasts. What more do you want? That thorn-crowned head can never again be raised in Israel. Let Him go forth an outcast upon the earth. Pilate was

startled by the immediate and ferocious response: "Away with Him! Crucify Him!"

No wonder that the governor thought that his prisoner's condition would soften the hearts of His persecutors, especially as there was no air of defiance about Jesus, for in spite of the disfigurement of His face and form, He was all gentle and submissive, a demeanor which at closer approach was seen to be mingled with indescribable sadness. But this well-meant attempt of Pilate failed utterly. What if the Jews did appreciate, as they must have done, that Jesus was now wholly vanquished, scourged nearly to death, His face beaten out of recognition, an object of contempt even to the common soldiers! They wanted more than this; His death alone would content them. Therefore, when Pilate said, "Behold the Man!" they roared out savagely, "Crucify Him!"

Why did not Jesus now break forth into a plea for justice, or at least for pity? Why did He not pour forth an appeal of passionate earnestness for His honor and His life, aye, and to save His countrymen from the dreadful guilt of deicide? Who can resist Him if he undertakes to persuade? Alas, the chief priests, they and all like them, can resist Jesus. Judas had done so; and they themselves had resisted His power of winning souls many a time as He taught in Jerusalem and in Galilee. And if that silent spectacle of innocent suffering could not move their hearts to pity, what words could succeed? The *Ecce Homo* has melted many very hard hearts into tears of genuine repentance since that day, and far more effectually than any words Jesus ever uttered; but it failed with the chief priests and their associates.

To all Christian people the mere picture of Jesus as the *Ecce Homo* is one of resplendent, if plaintive, beauty,

breathing out an indescribable impression of our Redeemer's blended majesty and love, all the more touching from the marks of ill-treatment He bears. The picture of His shame melts sinners with sympathy for Him and with contrition for their sins. The awful reality only stung the chief priests with more venomous hate. Seeing Him half dead made them long to see Him wholly dead—to see Him hung up a corpse in the sight of the entire nation.*

And what, meanwhile, were the Savior's thoughts? More than once during His public career he had refused to be made king. And having then rejected the crown of gold and the rich robes of royal state, He does not now refuse a crown of thorns and the purple rags of mockery and scorn. A mock king He consents to be; and a real king of all true-hearted souls in the universe He thereby has become.

Who that saw Jesus arrayed in His scarlet cloak, His naked bosom showing out spattered with blood, His drooping head crowned with a thorny crown of mockery, His eyes dripping tears mingled with blood, His hands pinioned tight together and enclosing His sceptre of reed, who that saw this *Ecce Homo* would believe the royal proclamation which He made to His followers the very evening before, "Be of good heart, I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33)? And again: "You call me Master, and Lord; and you say well, for so I am" (John xiii. 13).

And yet He had said truly. For has ever monarch

*We may pause here to ask what must have been His mother's feelings as she received in her place of waiting reports of this *Ecce Homo* scene. One messenger would say that her Son was the most heartrending spectacle ever seen; and another would whisper that His enemies had left Him the most hideous and disgusting object that man ever beheld. And in the whole world she alone knew the full meaning of the *Ecce Homo*.

reigned so widely and so long as our Redeemer; and for the very reason that He has conquered our hearts and mastered our souls by being scourged and reviled and crowned with thorns for our sakes?

God the Father had more than once exhibited His Son to the world as its Lord and Master. John the Baptist proclaimed that he had seen the Holy Ghost descending and remaining upon Him (John i. 33), and the multitude heard the Father's voice saying: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). But the Precursor gave Jesus His favorite title when, pointing to Him, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world" (John i. 36). That is truer now in the *Ecce Homo* than at the banks of the Jordan. Here is the Lamb being prepared for the sacrifice; here is shown exactly how the Father would have His beloved Son take away our sins.

"Behold the Man!" says Pilate to the chief priests, the Gentile to the Jew; behold your Man, your teacher, your king, and your priest! I, a heathen, plead with you for Him. But it was all in vain. And when Pilate and the Jews are gone, the Bride of the Lamb, Christ's Church, takes up the Roman's words and forever repeats them to the world: Behold the Man, the Man of sorrows, now made the sovereign lord of all consolation. Behold your Savior, whose humility is greater than your pride, whose constancy will outlast your frailty. And Holy Church frequently invites us to look at Him in His passion very closely, to study His features and His form, and learn of His heart its dearest lesson, meekness and humility.

A perfectly direct meeting of man with man is described as being face to face. Now I am face to face

with the *Ecce Homo*. Dare I look squarely into His face, and frankly meet the pleading glances of His eyes?

Truly, if I love Jesus Christ, I must learn how to love humiliations for His sake and for the sake of sinners. For our Lord was determined all through His passion to appear outwardly in every way like a sinner, as He had chosen to feel interiorly the whole misery of a lost soul. It was not easy to see any difference between Him and a veritable reprobate. And such was His way of saving sinners, atoning thus to His Father for us, His sinful brethren, so deeply does He love us. But we profit thereby only when we are willing to share all this with Him. As He would take the form of our sin, the shame of our sin, and become like us out of love of us, so in return He would have us resemble Him in this His atonement for us. We should have a feeling about sin resembling His, nay, identically His; especially the same sorrow for sin, which means the same motives of sorrow, namely, its injury to the sovereign goodness of our Heavenly Father, and its fatal hurt to our own immortal souls.

Another resemblance of Himself He desires in us is that we should love sinners as He loved them, and this He desires ardently. To be like Him we are to love them because they are our brothers, wayward children of our common Father; and because their fate, unless they are loved and saved by their brethren, is to be one of unspeakable horror and wholly irreparable. The entire purpose of Christ's passion, after it has saved a sinner, is to make him in turn a friend and a savior of other sinners. "For unto this are you called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps" (I. Peter ii, 21).

CHAPTER IX.

Pilate Rebukes Jesus for His Silence.

And [Pilate] saith to them: Behold the Man. When the chief priests, therefore, and the servants, had seen Him, they cried out, saying: Crucify Him! crucify Him! Pilate saith to them: Take Him you, and crucify Him; for I find no cause in Him. The Jews answered him: We have a law; and according to the law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore had heard this saying, he feared the more. And he entered into the hall again, and he said to Jesus: Whence art Thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore saith to Him: Speaketh Thou not to me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and I have power to release Thee? Jesus answered: Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above. Therefore, he that hath delivered Me to thee hath the greater sin (John xix. 4-11).

We have seen how Pilate's effort to save Jesus by the *Ecce Homo* was met by a fierce shout, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" He was greatly irritated by this perverse obstinacy, and he retorted, "Take Him, you, and crucify Him, for I find no cause in Him." This, though said in anger, was official permission to kill Jesus, and to do it by crucifixion. It sounded like surrender. But it was not enough; they wanted him to crucify Jesus. They ignored Pilate's offer, and they again crowded him back upon the religious issue: "We have a law; and according to the law He ought to die, because He made Himself

the Son of God." This caused him to fear the more; he greatly dreaded the fanaticism of the Jews.

The ultimate skill of the hypocrite is to invoke God's law against God's servants. How many times has even the Church's canon law been made a pretence to prevent her pontiffs and prelates from introducing much-needed reforms? How many times has the secular law been a dark wall of hindrance to the gospel of Christ? Even in civil affairs, if a man would usurp office or rob the people, he uses the forms of law. He oppresses honest citizens no less by the craft of his lawyers than the brute force of his minions, using the letter of the law to the hurt of its equities.

The law of Moses, say the Jews to Pilate, is against Jesus, because He claims to be the Son of God. And yet that law was made by the Father for the very sake of His Son Jesus, to prepare for Him, and to identify Him at His coming. Pilate understood nothing of this. But what frightened him was that the whole law and nation of the Jews seemed to be against Jesus.

The chief priests made it appear that this was no factional quarrel. There were no parties; all were on the same side, priests, council, Sadducees, Pharisees, elders, people—and their sacred law. This unnerved Pilate, and for a moment he seemed ready to throw Jesus to the Jews, as if throwing meat to hounds. But another fear haunted him, and it was suggested forcibly by their very accusation: "He made Himself the Son of God." He had all along felt that perhaps His prisoner was really some celestial personage. A perfect hero of calm fortitude He surely was. Might He not be more than that—something even divine? He had learned, through Herod's

action that morning, that Jesus had worked many wonders, and He had certainly been a powerful religious leader. Pilate, in fact, was afraid of Jesus, as well as of the Jews. He, therefore, drew Him back into the inner apartment to question Him. Happy for Pilate had he done so inspired purely by love of justice; but it was only to search for some new way out of his embarrassment. "Whence art Thou?" As if to say: Art thou a god? Canst Thou not destroy Thy enemies by a thunderbolt?

Jesus, knowing Pilate's motives, answered Him not a word. This course of our Redeemer was not adopted out of contempt for Pilate—by no means; but because miraculous power was now barred from Him, and all other expedients were futile, even supernaturally persuasive arguments, truths, appeals to reason. Had not Jesus said when first questioned that morning: "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice"? and none others will hear it. Pilate needed not miracles but courage. As to the Jews, men frenzied with rage, why argue with them about their law? Jesus had summarized that law long before: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God above all things, and thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 37). Love is the whole law and the prophets, and love is Jesus' only law; as to His enemies, hate was their only law that day.

Pilate had been always angry with the Jews, and now he is also irritated at our Savior for His silence. "I have power to crucify Thee," he exclaimed, and "Speakest Thou not to me?"—as if death were not a boon to Jesus after the disgrace He had suffered. But Jesus returned mildness for anger, and calmly gave Pilate an

admonition of great benefit if he had but accepted it: "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me unless it were given thee from above." As if to say, Thou shalt yet answer for thy decision of My case to a divine authority, infinitely higher than Jewish or even Roman. Pilate reckoned with the Jews and with Cæsar; he walked in their sight. Jesus ever regarded the Divine Will; it was always His meat and drink (John iv. 34), and especially in this His supreme hour.

Hence (as if to say) I look beyond and above you to the sovereign power of My Father. I am always thinking of Him and of His work. I know His purpose in Me; it is for Me to be crucified and not to be released.

Thus there shines in our Redeemer's darkened spirit a ray of divine faith, a virtue which sees the hand of a loving Providence in the worst no less than in the best of our fortunes. God's permission of our sufferings is His pledge to reward our patience in bearing them. In His every pain Jesus saw the stern purpose of His Father to ransom our race by His own Son's passion and death. From Pilate and the Jews who together killed Him, down to the obscurest legionary who spat in His face, He regarded His enemies as instruments of an infinitely loving Providence. He ardently desired to suffer death because He loved His Father's will far better than life. His natural love of life was thus overcome by a higher love. "Why should He fear who wished not to escape?" says St. Ambrose.

With how perfect a resignation did Jesus thus turn to the original mover of all His woes, His Father, offering Him meanwhile a love for sinners truly divine. With what reverence did He adore God, who could so love the

world of sinners as to give His only-begotten Son for their salvation, give Him up to such a cruel fate as this. What a continual and incalculable increase of love and admiration for His Father did His every pang bestow upon His human soul, knowing as He did that His Father, beholding all this shameful, this agonizing process of His Son's atonement, yet held steadfastly to His purpose, that we should be redeemed in a manner worthy of our state as His sons, worthy of our immortal destiny in His bosom.

That, according to some, was what Jesus meant by the words, "power from above," which had placed Him in Pilate's hands; or rather had abandoned Him totally, as far as "second causes" are concerned. How sorely He felt this, and how absolutely He submitted we see at every step in His passion. Friends of the earth were either paralyzed by fear, or, like Mary and John, were helpless to aid Him. Friends of heaven, the mighty angels, were held back by His dire compact with His Father to dispense with heavenly succors. To the cowardly Roman let Him turn—oh, how vainly! To the bloodthirsty Jews—"Crucify Him!" is their response. To the heavenly throne—it is hidden in the darkness which had settled on His soul with the shades of evening the day before. Only God in the obscure night of pure faith is left Him.

He protects Me, though He abandons Me, thought our Lord. He conquers by Me, though I am overthrown and ruined. He is present with Me, though I feel but despondency within Me, and Pilate and the ravening Jews are around about Me. And I love My Father through it all. I love Him, though He fills Me with bit-

terness. I trust Him, though He has forsaken Me. He smites Me as if I were the foremost among the damned, and I yet know that He loves Me, and that He forgives and saves sinners just in proportion to the rigor of His punishment of Me; for all this He does because He has appointed Me their Redeemer.

How plain a lesson does this teach us. Between God's will and man's will my soul is constantly balancing, but especially in times of trial. And as Jesus dealt not so much with Pilate and the Jews as with His Father, so Christians following His example, and under the influence of His grace, are less concerned with the malice of their persecutors than with their own submission to the Divine Will. "Be ye humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God" (I. Peter v. 6), says St. Peter; mighty and loving is our heavenly Father, never so much so as when chastening the child He loves.

Jesus added to His admonition to Pilate a few words whose meaning is somewhat obscure: "Therefore, he that hath delivered Me to thee hath the greater sin." They may be interpreted as follows: Pilate, indeed, had not sought to commit this murder; it had been thrust on him. In this Providence had permitted him a glorious opportunity. Who can imagine the glory of Pontius Pilate if he had been a true Roman and an upright judge in the trial of Jesus? The same power from on high was even yet striving by every inner and outer influence of good to thus place him in the highest position among all judges and rulers from the beginning of the world to the end. But he was wilfully unequal to the test. Meanwhile those who had delivered Jesus to him were more positively culpable and more gravely so. They had long sought to

put Him to death. They were conspirators against Him from the first beginnings of His public career. They had the greater sin, because they hated Jesus with deliberate rancor, long cherished malignity. They had thereby committed murder in their hearts long before this; even as chief priests and judges in Israel. And that very morning, in their court, they had deliberately slain Him with their tongues. Pilate was, indeed, their partner in guilt; but his share of it was cowardice, and theirs was malignant hate. As between the Roman and the Jew, the blood of the innocent victim was upon the Roman by his sin of timidity, and upon the Jew by malicious and positive purpose. Therefore, the Jew had the greater sin.

CHAPTER X.

Pilate Delivers Jesus Up to be Crucified.

And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him. But the Jews cried out, saying: If thou release this Man, thou art not Cæsar's friend; for whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar. Now when Pilate had heard these words, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat, in the place that is called Lithostrotos, and in Hebrew Gabbatha. And it was the parasceve of the Pasch, about the sixth hour, and he saith to the Jews: Behold your King! But they cried out: Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him! Pilate saith to them: Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered: We have no king but Cæsar. Then, therefore, he delivered Him to them to be crucified (John xix. 12-16).

The three parties in this great drama in Pilate's court, and their various motives and conduct, are the incessant study of all thoughtful spirits. Let us, as we approach the end, mark well the differences between them. There are the Jews: their incredible hate, their obstinacy, their wild clamor, their fierce threats. Pilate; temporizing, managing, compromising—from cowardice. Jesus: patiently suffering every infliction—from motives of the most disinterested love.

We have seen that our Savior's words, though few, were not without effect upon Pilate. He "sought to release" Jesus, as he had done several times before; but in no different spirit, and with no other result. He was what he was, a temporizer. How often it happens that the advocates of justice are like Pilate, wavering, full of

plans and pleadings, compromises and expedients—soon to be swept away by the downright energy of the advocates of wrong—direct, earnest, outspoken—knowing what they want and bound to have it, working together as one man.

The harder Pilate struggled to save Jesus, the more earnest were the Jews to have him put Him to death. Their malice is whetted by Pilate's pity. The kindly virtues, indeed, are of little force unless moved by a positive conscience. And Pilate's desire to save Jesus, was it worthy the name of a virtue? Could you call his cowardly defence of Jesus the act of a conscientious man? It was rather the struggle between fear of the Jews and fear of the gloomy tyrant whom he served, the Emperor Tiberius.

The criminal purpose of the Jews grew stronger with opposition. Why was not Pilate's virtue also made stronger by opposition? Because his fear of doing wrong was not as strong as the Jews' determination to have him crucify Jesus. In the conflict between fear of the Emperor on one side, and hatred of Jesus on the other, the latter was more violent and persistent, and it won the day. In all this there is a very practical lesson for those who are appointed to defend the right.

How long Pilate parleyed with the Jews, at this closing period of the trial, we cannot tell. But the evangelist gives us the end: "The Jews cried out, saying: If thou release this Man thou art not Cæsar's friend; for whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." Jesus had invoked upon Pilate a higher power—Almighty God; the Jews now threatened him with another higher power—Tiberius Cæsar. This was really the decisive

stroke; the trial was over. Cæsar was Pilate's higher and highest power. "When he heard these words, he brought Jesus forth and sat down in the judgment seat." But, true to his character, he hesitated yet again, doubtless now without the least hope of saving his prisoner. It was rather to annoy those whom he dared not defy, that, pointing to the wretched figure of Jesus, and in a sort of terrible raillery, he "saith to the Jews: Behold your King!"

Jesus was thus once more displayed publicly and offered to the Jews as their King. And He heard their answering cry; it was flung fiercely into His face, and ascended to the throne above: "Away with Him!" It is a savage yell. And once is not enough; as it explodes from their hearts of bitterness it is repeated venomously: "Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate taunted them again: "Shall I crucify your King?" This stung them to the quick and led them on to their worst act of apostasy; they proclaimed their formal abdication of racial independence: "We have no king but Cæsar." They were now on an equal footing with the pagan governor.

"We have no king but Cæsar"; neither has Pilate. All the enemies of Jesus stand now on common ground; and the chief priests of God's people make over their race and nation to the heathen and to their Emperor.

How weak is Pilate's plea, how quick the verdict of the Jews, and how cruel. The threat, "Thou art no friend of Cæsar's," makes Pilate tremble. It is the last stroke; it starts Jesus on the way of the cross. "We have no king but Cæsar," spoken by the chief priests, makes the strength of imperial Rome the right hand of the iniquity

of the Jews. "Then, therefore, he delivered Him to them to be crucified."

And so the trial ended. The last word of the prosecution was public homage to Cæsar as the only king of the Jews, paid as the price of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.*

"We have no king but Cæsar." There spoke the Sadducees, traitors to their country, as they were apostates to their religion. This exclamation would seem a blunder on their part, for it was calculated to antagonize the Pharisees, the leaders of the patriotic party, and so divide counsels among the conspirators. But not so: the Pharisees acquiesced. They would accept any king but Jesus. Their very instincts taught them that His spirit of interior worship of God and of compassion for sinners would supplant them in the affections of all true Israelites. The Pharisees stood against Him from fanaticism and envy, the Sadducees from worldliness and scepticism. The alliance was ill-sorted, but it stood firm to the end.

The abdication of Jewish national independence was destined to be perpetual. After they had rejected Jesus and crowned Him with thorns, and then had stood up for Cæsar as against their God-given King, the Jews put the crown of Israel's royalty on Cæsar's brow. There it

*We know what happened to the Jews at the hands of the Cæsars. A similar fate, though not so tragical, has befallen many Christian sects which have appealed to the civil authority to aid their revolt against God's Church, her doctrine or her discipline. Most of the Protestant denominations at and after the division of Christendom, in the sixteenth century, have purchased the assistance of the secular power against the Church, sometimes even against one another, by surrendering their spiritual independence, exchanging thereby the rule of popes or prelates or synods for that of kings and their ministers. And frequently what was meant to be only a temporary alliance with secular rulers, has fastened the usurpation of the State over religion upon a whole people for generations.

has remained ever since, an iron crown of relentless hatred of their race. Every Cæsar, great or little, from that day to this, has ruled the Jews as he would not rule his slaves. And this in turn has driven the race sullenly back upon itself, perpetuating its narrowness of soul and deepening its aversion for Christ and His religion. On the other hand, a kindlier rule has often had the effect of broadening the Jewish mind and softening its aversions, and has often led to a calm consideration of the claims of Jesus, and resulted in many conversions of Jews to the Christian faith.

Till recent times this kindly treatment of the Jews has been almost unknown, and it is even yet exceptional. Kings that are fatherly to their own people are tyrants over the Jews. Peoples, remarkable for gentleness of nature, hate and oppress the Jews. Even though they speak the same language and live in the same country with another race, they are made to feel that they are not at home. The most distinctly marked of all the families of mankind, the Jews are scattered throughout all lands, literally a dispersed people. They are to this day exiles in regions which have known them for ages, denizens and not citizens, familiar and yet strange. The blood of Christ, humanity's sweetest boon, is their self-inflicted curse. And the traits that led their chief priests to condemn Him, and Judas to betray Him, are yet considered to be their peculiar characteristics—craft and avarice. Deceitfulness and love of money—the Jews are deemed to excel all mankind in these odious vices. If, therefore, they are weak and suffering, they are despised and unpitied. If they are strong, they are hated and feared; never loved, never trusted, whether by Christian, Turk or pagan. Men see the cruel wretch Caiaphas in every

rich Jew, and the greedy traitor Judas in every Jew of the baser sort.

Such was the portent in their cry: We have no king but Cæsar; away with Jesus and crucify Him! Away with Him! Away with all the promises made to Abraham and the Fathers for our sakes. Away with the royal Son of David, our prophet, priest and king. Cruel and idolatrous Cæsar is our only king now and forevermore. The blood of Jesus be upon us, and the spilling of that blood we will bequeath to our children, as their most precious heirloom. No race of atheists or pagans shall be so perfectly anti-Christian as ours.

God had formed the children of Israel to perpetuate His promises as in a living book of human beings. Their ancestors and children were ever on their lips and in their hearts. He had made them essentially a perpetual people, standing for the everlasting God, a rainbow in the sky of nations. They were a covenant of love and of mercy to all mankind. And when the day of fulfilment came, they undertook to absorb for themselves alone the entire benignity of the Creator for the whole human family, a crime of inconceivable pride.

Of all the crimes ever committed, what one equals the slaying of Jesus Christ for preaching equal salvation to all men and nations? What crime has reached in its shame to so remote an age? God perpetuates His justice in the sorrows of the race that would not permit Him, if murder could prevent it, to perpetuate His mercy to all races of men to the end of time.

And yet the crime of the Jews is but typical of every sin against God. Every sin reverses an eternal order of love, and establishes a reign of perpetual treason. What can stop the onward flow of bitterness that is begun in

the malice of every sin? Only the miracle of divine pardon.

Jesus knew all the future misery of His kinsmen as clearly as He knew their present apostasy. And the future pained Him as intensely as the present. St. Paul said of the Jews: "I have great sadness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ, for my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. ix. 3). Our Redeemer actually suffered the anathema of God for His brethren and kinsmen, and He will not permit His sufferings to be finally in vain. He has never ceased to love His people. Let us look for the supreme wonders of the love of Christ, not in what God has done or will do for the Gentiles, but in the conversion of His own nation. Hear the inspired promise of St. Paul, not more truly the Apostle of the Gentiles than he was the foremost lover of the Jews: "For I would not have you ignorant, brethren," says he to his Gentile converts, "of this mystery (lest you should be wise in your own conceits), that blindness in part has happened in Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles should come in. And so all Israel should be saved. . . . As concerning the Gospel, indeed, they are enemies for your sake; but as touching the election, they are most dear for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 25-29).

And let us remember our part in making this blessed prophesy true. Our part is kindness to the Jews personally, a charitable defense of them in our conversation among ourselves, fervent prayers for their conversion in our devotions, and a ready effort to practically lift from

their hearts the veil that yet hinders them from seeing Christ as their King and their Redeemer, which He really is, even more truly, if possible, than He is our own.

In a short hour after Jesus heard the dreadful cry: "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" He will come to His death agony, and He will cry out to His Father with a resistless intensity of feeling: "Father forgive them!" And we are entirely certain that at this very moment in heaven Jesus has a special grace for those of His Gentile followers who pray as He did for the Jews, His kinsmen, and labor for their conversion.

Meanwhile our own prayer to heaven is in the same words as the Jewish people's imprecation upon themselves, but offered in the very opposite spirit. Thy blood be upon me, O Jesus! And what shall I say? My blood be upon Thee? Nay, it is upon Thee now, my sins are upon Thee, my fate is in Thy hands and in Thy heart, bleeding with love's wounds for me.

Jesus says to me: "Put Me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm" (Cant. viii. 6). O Jesus crucified, may Thy blood be upon me as a sign and a badge! May it be upon my outward life because Thy love is within my soul, signifying the deepest gratitude to Thee, and the most steadfast loyalty in all my affections. And may Thy blood be upon my children, namely, upon all my works and words, and ever redden with its glorious merit the whole stream of my life. May that seal of Thy blood be at last a shining mark upon me, to place me among those of whom it is said: "These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Apoc. vii. 14).

PART IV.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS.

CHAPTER I.

The Cross.

Then therefore [Pilate] delivered Him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and they took off the purple cloak from Him, and put His own garments on Him, and they led Him out to crucify Him. And bearing His own cross He went forth. And there were also two other malefactors led with Him to be put to death (Matt. xxvii. 31; Mark xv. 20; Luke xxiii. 25, 32; John xix. 16)

When we come to the occurrences after our Savior's death, it will be noticed that Pilate then said to the chief priests: "You have a guard." This indicates that they were given direct charge of the execution of Jesus, and that the soldiers, after the sentence was passed, looked to them for orders. This is further indicated by the evangelist's expression, "He (Pilate) delivered Him to them to be crucified."

Nothing could please the chief priests better than to have Jesus crucified by the Romans under their direction. Their joy was frantic when at last they had Him in their power. Doubtless a great cheer went up. Victory! Victory over our enemy! Yet they were trembling with anxiety; the sentence must be instantly carried out. They were still afraid that something might intervene. Pilate might even yet change his mind, and they did not forget our Redeemer's former miracles. They therefore hurried on the preparations. As their purpose from the begin-

ning had been crucifixion, it is possible that they had ordered the cross prepared beforehand.

They are impatient at the delay of Pilate in writing the inscription to be hung around Jesus' neck as He journeys forth: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews"; and their hurry may account for their not noticing its terms and protesting against them till later on. They are also impatient at the delay caused by getting ready the "other malefactors." Hurry, hurry! Oh, that He were at last hung high on His Roman gibbet. It is already noonday—who knows but Pilate may yet revoke the sentence?

Jesus and the cross are at last together. We think He must have pressed it to His heart and affectionately kissed it, as His guards gave it to Him. His outward eyes see their stern faces; those cruel men who have but recently mocked and outraged Him are now giving Him His cross. But His inward eyes behold His Father. Jesus receives His cross from the hand of God.

The pagan orator, Cicero, said of the cross that it was not so much as to be named by a freeman. Not so to Jesus, not so to us. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. vi. 14). If that was the mind of the Apostle, how much rather was it the mind of his Master?

And yet Jesus felt all the disgrace of it. History tells us of André, the British officer who was hung as a spy in the American Revolution, how he implored his captors that he might die like a soldier and be shot to death. He was indescribably angered and distressed to die by the halter, as if he were a midnight assassin, or had raped an innocent girl, crimes he loathed and hence loathed

their peculiar penalty. It was for every murder and rape, treason and ingratitude that men were ever guilty of, that Jesus was to die. He felt that the shame of such a fate was fitly shown by this kind of death, and the instrument selected to inflict it. All this feeling of aversion did His love for us overcome, when He gladly took up His cross and started forward to Calvary.

The fetters are loosened from our Savior's limbs; the purple garment of ridicule is removed—He must be clothed in His own garments and known now as Himself; the cross will be shame enough. Quickly, therefore, He is again stripped naked and once more resumes His own clothes. He is now ready for His last journey. They could not prepare for it too quickly for Him. Quick, quick! loosen these handcuffs; my hands love them well, but they love the nails better. Take from Me this sceptre of reed; it served Me well, but the cross is My true and eternal sceptre. Take this red cloak of contempt; it served Me well, but now give Me My own clothes, help Me to put them on; now I am ready. Doubtless He said not all this in words, but such were His thoughts. Nor would Pilate delay. He had washed his hands of the whole bitter business. From early morning till near noon he had spent the time, terrorized from without, agonized from within, wrangling with these wild creatures about this curious wretch of a Rabbi.

It was the Hebrew sixth hour of the day, or noon-time, when Jesus was thus prepared for His last journey, being clad in His own clothes, about to take up His own cross, His name and title hanging from His neck. He must have felt well-nigh totally exhausted, after all that He had undergone. But when He saw His cross, noth-

ing was impossible to His courage and His fortitude. To Him it was not a shameful gibbet; it was the chosen symbol of His tenderest love. But it was hard to carry; at best and by its very shape and size an unwieldy object, not easy to manage if a man were fresh and robust, and He was worn out by the sufferings already endured. It was heavy because it was framed of strong timbers intended to bear a man's weight securely—a heavy, crushing load Jesus finds it as He gets it upon His shoulder. When He begins to move forward He can no more than totter along under it; He is grieved to find His bodily forces almost spent.

As we see Him thus burdened, our hearts should be crushed with anguish, knowing that He took this death instrument upon Him in order that He might save us from an unhappy death—painfully to carry it, slowly to die upon it for our eternal welfare. But Jesus was glad of His cross, though He knew that His enemies had chosen it for its degrading associations. Indeed, that palliated their guilt in His eyes; they had selected for Him what would be His own choice, had He been free to choose the instrument of the world's salvation.

The greatest triumph of a champion is to enter the conflict unarmed and, as his antagonist would strike him, instantly to seize his sword, wrest it out of his hands and slay him with his own weapon. The enemy of mankind smote our champion with the cross, and with the cross Jesus has conquered him and won for us an everlasting victory.

Taking up His cross was to Jesus literally a new departure in His work of atonement. As He had done at entering the Garden of Olives, so now, as He starts

toward Calvary, He forms His intention anew to be our Redeemer and His Father's atoning Son. Ever since He began His passion, His soul felt crushed by the weight of our sins, His memory defiled by them, His understanding insulted and blasphemed. It relieved His soul to feel His body now placed under the same weight; the whole Man is at last to be given up in sacrifice for love of His race. How tenderly He fixed His eyes upon the cross. His heart was already nailed to it.

The cross has ever meant the sweetest joy to Christians, especially to dying Christians; but to Jesus, about to die upon it, it was indeed the power of God and the wisdom of God (I. Cor. i. 18, 24); the power of God to save us from all the force of demons or men, the wisdom of God to detect and expose every fraud of the ancient serpent and his brood.

Jesus would call it, My cross; Mine by every true title, the ensign of My most splendid victory, the victory of My gentle love over men's furious hate; the chosen sign of My tenderest affection for My worst enemies—My cross, the test of My friendship's uttermost fidelity.

He whose life was the most precious under heaven was anxious to give it up on the cross. He hindered no cruelty that might deprive Him of it, He allowed everything that might hasten His loss of it. And with what supernal wisdom, since to lose His life was to find it again united in immortal life with myriads of ransomed brethren. Does not this reprove our over-anxious care of our bodily health? Does it not justly modify our views of the horrors of death?

The lessons here to be learned are manifold. One of them is the glory of the virtue of fortitude. Jesus' bodily

strength might fail, as indeed it did, but not His determined purpose. His courage never faltered. He never for an instant flinched; and the very perfection of His mental determination was in the act of shouldering the beam on which He knew He was shortly to be nailed for His death. Therefore, neither should we lose courage when the cross is laid heavy upon us, even crushing us to the earth. Helpless in everything else, we can and we ought to be determined in our heart's resolve. We are men of Christ and we can make our cross His. He bore His cross for us, He died on it for our sakes. Let us say with the Apostle: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

God grant us the grace to love our sorrows as His Son loved His cross. Patience in affliction and under adversity brings peace in strife, solace in pain, and above all else, secure hope of pardon for sin.

Another lesson is this: As Jesus loved His cross, in the very same degree did He love His enemies. Now I say well and piously: In the cross is my only hope. Will I add sincerely that the spirit of the cross of Christ shall dictate my only method of dealing with my adversaries?

We may easily summarize the reasons why Jesus loved the death of the cross by preference. His enemies chose it for Him, both Jews and Gentiles, and He preferred to do their bidding rather than His own, saving them by the means they themselves had chosen. Again, it was one of the most cruel deaths possible to die, and the most execrable: "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Deut. xxi. 25; Gal. iii. 13). Thus the cross proved to Jesus better than any miracle He ever wrought how much His Father loved the world (John iii. 16).

Furthermore, it was a conspicuous kind of death, even spectacular, dying in dreadful agonies in mid-air. Jesus would be seen lifted up between earth and heaven, dying and dead for sinners in sight of the whole universe. Once more, the cross affords Him and His Church forever a unique emblem of atoning love, a sign and a standard of striking appearance, the crucifix—the Redeemer raised high above the world in His death, arms outstretched and hands uplifted. From that hour to the end of the world, every sacrament and every other spiritual gift, little or great, shall be imparted to mankind by Holy Church with this sign. Finally, as Adam ruined the race by the fruit of the tree of sin, so Christ would save it by the fruit of the tree of love: “Death by the tree, life by the cross,” says St. Ambrose. Holy Church, in her Good Friday services, would have us imagine the wood of this instrument of our redemption growing in the Garden of Eden, and chosen on the spot and at the hour of our downfall, the tree predestinated for our Redeemer’s cross.

“He, our Maker, deeply grieving
That our parent Adam fell,
When he ate the fruit forbidden,
Whose reward was death and hell,
Marked e’en then this tree, the ruin
Of the first tree to dispel.”

“Faithful cross, O tree of all trees,
Thou dost first and peerless shine;
Not a grove on earth can show us
Such a flower and leaf as thine;
Sweet the wood and sweet the iron,
Sweet thy burden so divine.”

CHAPTER II.

Simon Helps Jesus to Carry the Cross.

And as they led Him away, they laid hold on one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, the father of Alexander and of Rufus, whom they forced to take up His cross; and they laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus (Matt. xxvii. 32; Mark xv. 21; Luke xxiii. 26).

After the soldiers had helped Jesus to place His shoulder under the cross, at the point where the upright piece and the cross-beam were joined, the word of command was given, and the way of the cross began.

A great multitude immediately surrounded Him and His guards, as, accompanied by the "two other malefactors," He started forward. Vast as was that multitude, to the eye of Jesus it was no more than a little dust compared to the sand on the seashore, for He saw all the generations of men going with Him to Calvary to be redeemed.

The soldiers forced a passage through the dense mass of people, many of whom were amazed and confounded at such a sight, many others wildly shouting out their triumph and bitterly insulting Jesus. He must have felt deeply distressed at this, standing as He did for our fallen nature, and at the same time representing His heavenly Father. Yet we doubt, as we have already intimated, if this feeling had the mastery in His soul. With all His sense of degradation, He was glad to be moving onward to His death for us. He willingly "endured the cross,

despising the shame," knowing, too, that the example He set us in bearing it would hinder us from being "wearied and fainting" in our minds (Heb. xii. 2, 3), when burdened with life's cares or afflicted with the penalties of our sins. Except for the darkness of His spirit and the extreme feebleness of His body, Jesus, we surmise, would have found the way of the cross the least painful part of His passion.

How very much is meant by those words: "Bearing His own cross He went forth." Wearied and broken with pain of body and grief of soul, Jesus struggles forward, the end of the cross dragging along the ground behind Him. The road is rough and His steps are difficult; every stone the cross strikes jolts it and shocks His wounded nerves.

Although He loved that burden, it was indeed a heavy one to Him in His exhausted condition. He was once as strong a man as any workman in Galilee, whether to lift a weight, carry a load, or for any other bodily exertion. Not so now; His bodily force was nearly gone. Yet He did not faint from first to last on His journey; no great distance in itself, but interminable to Him. There is an ancient tradition that He fell more than once on the way, and the Gospel tells us that He needed assistance soon after starting forward.

Jesus soon fell, and the guards forced a stranger named Simon of Cyrene to help Him carry His cross. No wonder He fell. He was weakened by the Agony in the Garden and the bloody sweat, by the cruel treatment over night in the house of Caiaphas, the scourging and the crowning with thorns, the painful journeys He had already made, the total lack of nourishment since the

Paschal supper, the lack of sleep, and above all by grief of heart.

Yet we can hardly suppose that Jesus easily allowed Simon to help Him. He loved His cross too well for that, and He was jealous of the honor of carrying it. No miser ever loved gold as Jesus loved that wood. But He could not carry it alone, He must yield a share of it to another. It was very large; we know that it was certainly more than ten feet long, perhaps as much as fifteen, for when it was fixed in the ground and He was hanging on it, a reed was necessary in order to reach His mouth with the sponge full of vinegar. So the weight of the great gibbet soon bore Jesus down. He must receive help if He is to get to Calvary with it.

We may imagine how they treated Him, those heartless men, when they saw in Him signs of failing; His panting breath, His tottering steps, and at last His fall to the ground. How does a brutal driver treat his overloaded beast? He curses him and beats him along till he drops. So did these soldiers treat Jesus. They were the very ones who had mocked Him and spit in His face and crowned Him in Pilate's hall within an hour. They thought much less of Him than any man does of an animal. They kicked Him as He lay under His cross, and dragged Him gasping upon His feet. But they must provide Him a helper—they were hurried on by the Jews; the criminal might die on the way; their dinner hour had come. But whom could they get?

Jesus was aided by no willing friend. Only weak women dared avow friendship for Him on that journey. There are no volunteers. The only willing cross-bearer that day is Jesus Himself. The time will come when

millions of willing souls, men, women and even children, will crowd forward everywhere to die martyrs for His faith and for His cross. But that must be only after Pentecost. On Good Friday many an honest Jew, rather than so much as touch the cross of Jesus of Nazareth, would have suffered death. No Roman soldier would stoop to help Him, though the dregs of all nations were enrolled in the legions. But the eye of the officer in charge lighted on a strongly built man in the crowd, seemingly a stranger, curiously observing the procession. This was Simon of Cyrene.

And who and what was Simon? From his sons' names, and for other reasons, he is supposed to have been a Jew of the dispersion, just arrived for the pass-over. Or he may have been a humble Hebrew countryman—"coming from the country"—whom Providence thus selected to be co-bearer with Jesus of the cross of our redemption. He was a stalwart man, and his dress showed him to be a peasant and a stranger, and for these reasons they could inflict the indignity on him with the more impunity. They must have threatened him—"they laid hold on him"; they forced him to help our Savior, perhaps they struck him and dragged him up to Him, and goaded him with their spears.

It was a horrible shock to Simon. He had been absorbed in looking at that poor figure, lying flat on the ground, bleeding, dreadfully beaten, and with a strange circle of thorn branches about his temples. Who is He? What does it all mean? What a disgusting and hideous object. He must be some awful criminal, carrying His own gibbet to death; for a countless multitude of people join the soldiers in violent words and insults against Him.

And, worst of all, here are the chief priests themselves, leading and commanding His execution. As Simon thinks these things, and perhaps begins to ask questions about them, what is his dismay to be suddenly griped by two or three soldiers and dragged forward with dreadful threats, compelled to help the criminal to carry that cross?

But a change came over him when he met the glances of Jesus and doubtless heard a few gentle words of thanks: I thank thee, Simon, for helping Me with My cross. I beg thee not to believe that I am a bad man, a robber, a blasphemer, or any way deserving of this fate. Thou shalt never be the worse for this journey with Me. Our priests and our countrymen are wholly mistaken about Me. Come, let us go on together quickly. Thus may Jesus have spoken as the guards lifted Him from the ground and He and Simon took the cross upon their shoulders. And He may have added: I am Jesus of Nazareth who gives the world joy through this cross. I am the Redeemer of mankind, and thy Redeemer, as thou now feelest in thy heart.

All Christendom has envied Simon his singular privilege, which must have made him a saint. A very certain tradition says the same of his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, mentioned in the holy narrative.

If a single glance of Jesus instantly saved Peter, if one word swept Matthew immediately away from his money tables, how easy for Jesus to change the loathing of Simon into the most ardent affection by speaking to him a few words as he takes a share of the very cross itself.

Happy Simon! Blessed day when thou camest into

the city from thy country home to worship at the Paschal solemnities. In paradise itself, our Redeemer will say of thee: This is Simon of Cyrene, the man who came to My help when I was crushed beneath My cross on the way to Calvary.

And if one objects that Simon had no merit because he was compelled and constrained to carry the cross, I answer, neither had I any merit in my conversion till after the Lord's grace had begun to constrain me. To be willing to be constrained is our best merit. Is it nothing to be able to say "The charity of Christ constraineth us" (II. Cor. v. 14)? I was indeed forced, Simon may say, but as soon as Jesus looked at me I pitied Him. And then He spoke to me, and, as I heard Him calling my name and thanking me, I thought my heart would melt within my breast, so much did I begin to love Him. And after that I had the strength of a giant for sharing His burden of the cross. Each one of us who bears his cross of pain or of disgrace manfully for Christ's sake, partakes of Simon's privilege. "Let us go forth, therefore, to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. xiii. 13).

CHAPTER III.

The Women of Jerusalem.

And there followed Him a great multitude of people, and of women, who bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning to them said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me; but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days shall come wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us; and to the hills: Cover us. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?

And they bring him into the place called Golgotha, which, being interpreted, is the place of Calvary (Matt. xxvii. 33; Mark xv. 22; Luke xxiii. 27-31; John xix. 17).

Jesus went forth to Calvary in the sight of "a great multitude of people, and of women." He was glad to see so many. In spirit He invited the entire race of Adam to go with Him on His Way of the Cross. If they but knew it, He had called them every one to share Simon's place: "Unless a man deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me, he is not worthy to be My disciple (Matt. xvi. 24).

For the most part this was a disorderly mob of people, and greatly excited, going along with cries and shouts, insults and taunts. But the same is not to be said of the female portion, for these were deeply grieved and very reverent. They were far too numerous to be only His regular escort of the women of Galilee. They were, in

fact, "women of Jerusalem," his adherents and friends resident in the city. Among them were certainly the Galilean women, held, no doubt, in high honor by their sisters of the city. And we cannot be mistaken in supposing that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was with them, honored above them all.*

Doubtless some were wives and daughters of the conspirators themselves. Just as Pilate's wife had admonished her husband and would have saved him from his awful crime, so these women would wish to atone for the crime of their men, their city and their race.

It was not usual for the women of Israel to be gathered in a sort of public assemblage such as they formed at the Way of the Cross, much less to raise their women's voices in open protest against the official acts of the priesthood. They did it now, however, because their dearest friend and most fearless champion was about to be judicially murdered. If women are weaker than men, they are more persistent; and these, if they could not save Jesus, were determined at least to weep over Him publicly, and to console Him on His death journey. It was no easy thing for them to make their way to Him, and then to hold their place among the crowd of rough men that surged

*We will consider Mary's part in the passion further on. But in this place we may quote some words of Cardinal Newman (*Meditations and Devotions*), who believes as we do that she was present with the women of Jerusalem in the Way of the Cross: "Mary had known Him beautiful and glorious, with the freshness of divine innocence and peace upon His countenance; now she saw Him so changed and deformed that she could scarce have recognized Him, save for the piercing, thrilling, peace-inspiring look He gave her. Still, He was now carrying the load of the world's sins, and, all-holy though He was, He carried the image of them on His very face. He looked like some outcast or outlaw who had frightful guilt upon Him. He had been made sin for us, who knew no sin; not a feature, not a limb, but spoke of guilt, of a curse, of punishment, of agony."

along the streets. But they did it, all bathed in tears, all overcome with sympathy.

He well deserved it of them. The women "bemoaned and lamented" one who had raised high the virtues on which their happiness depends. He was for peace on earth to men of good will, and for peace making always. He was for patient endurance of injury, patient suffering of pain. He was all for meekness. He was against the dreadful sword and the awful glory of war—the terror and woe of all women, slaughtering their husbands, making their little ones orphans, themselves desolate widows. If Jesus had His way, these women knew full well that the only force on earth would be the sweet compulsion of holy love. All this the women of Jerusalem felt deeply, and they bemoaned and lamented the bloody downfall of their great friend and prophet.

To women the mission of Jesus had opened a new era. He had secured them a life of honor, and protection from men's brutal appetites. The favorite virtue of a woman, chastity, was the brightest jewel in His crown. No virtue was more prominent in Himself and in all who loved Him. Not even the lying malignity of the conspirators had dared to accuse Jesus or His followers of uncleanness. He had above all honored chastity in His virgin mother. In her He had enthroned a most pure woman queen of earth and heaven, advancing their sex to an unheard of dignity. The shame fastened upon them by Eve's transgression was effaced by the second Eve, their sister, Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus.

Not only was He a miracle of chastity in Himself and His mother, but a miracle of the other extreme of virtue, pity for fallen women. His charity was equal to His

purity. How different in this from other men. The very ones who debauched women usually flung them off as the foulest criminals. Not so this purest of beings. He would not stone the adulteress, though by refusing to do so He risked His hold on the people; and as He saved her He knew how to convert her. He would not banish from His invariable escort of devout women the converted harlot. To her He gave the highest honor accorded to any one on Calvary and at the resurrection, only excepting the queenly place of innocent womanhood in the person of His mother.

And He loved what they most passionately loved, childhood. They flocked to Him always with their darling little ones, to whom He gave the protection of guardian angels, and whom He proclaimed the type of all Christian perfection. The women rightly claimed that He was *their* prophet, He was *their* Messias, with a meaning tenfold more sweet than He was to men.

And now, see Him! Oh, let us bewail and lament the downfall of our blessed friend. He needs us, weak women as we are; for His Apostles have all fled from Him in this His hour of direst need. The very leader of them has sworn many oaths that he never knew Him; the treasurer of His little company has sold Him to His doom; His Apostles and all other men have deserted Him; let us be faithful. Oh, look at Him! O God! See Him in that crowd which comes pouring along from Pilate's palace. Oh, what agony in His face. How huge is the cross He staggers under. And what is that on His poor head? Is it possible! A crown of thorns! There, He falls! He falls! And the guards are kicking Him; now they drag a man, all unwilling, from the heartless crowd,

and force him to help carry that fearful cross. Oh, that we could give Him our willing help with His burden; nay, could take all its weight ourselves, could set Him free and die in His place, or at least could join Him in His death. Oh, let us bewail and lament Him; let us call to Him, and have Him know that if all men desert Him, not so the women—we will be true and we will proclaim our loyalty; even though the cruel chief priests put us out of the synagogues, even though the dreadful soldiers kill us.

Thus we interpret the women of Jerusalem. We do not suppose that they were very highly enlightened, or fully understood just what He meant by the words He now spoke to them, and by His prophesies of what was in store for unhappy Israel. But Jesus knew that their allegiance was ardent and fearless, just as they knew He would be glad to see them and hear their words of sympathy; and they hoped that He would have a last message for them. They were not disappointed.

He stopped in His journey; He raised His head and beckoned with His hand, and they ceased their loud and frantic weeping. For a few moments He secured silence from even the mob. And then He spoke to the women, an audience worthy of Him, souls who believed in Him, souls tender and true. And as they had bewailed and lamented Him, He bewailed and lamented them. Faithful to His divine instincts of charity, He forgot Himself even in that dreadful plight and He thought only of them, mothers and wives of the men of Jerusalem. What He said is His longest recorded utterance during His passion: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold,

the days shall come wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck"; and He further revealed to them the terrors of the siege of Jerusalem, which was almost literally the crucifixion of the people of Israel.*

The beautiful incident of Veronica wiping Jesus' face with her napkin was, according to devout tradition, another interruption in our Redeemer's journey. Simon eased His bleeding shoulders, Veronica lovingly wiped and cleansed His sad face, stained with blood and spittle and sweat. Presently she is roughly thrust back into the crowd, not without securing two priceless gifts—His look of gratitude is printed on her heart forever; and His half-dying expression of face is marvelously printed on her napkin. But the picture of Jesus' face upon her living memory was more indelible than the miraculous one on her napkin. A sincere sympathy for Jesus, by which a devout soul is ever wiping and cleansing His face by meditating on His passion, is rewarded with a memory stored like a picture gallery with representations of what He did for love of us; and occasionally by a look of predestinating love straight from His very eyes.

And now "They bring Him into the place called Golgotha, which, being interpreted, is the place of Calvary." So ended the Way of the Cross. And that procession to Calvary has never stopped, nor ever will till the final reckoning day. On and on they come, chosen by God's Spirit to follow their Redeemer, the very favorites of God,

*The Jewish historian Josephus relates that at the siege of Jerusalem, which was one generation after our Lord's death, the Roman general ordered five hundred Jews to be crucified daily, as the unhappy creatures were captured wandering outside the walls in search of food.

cross-laden men and women out of all nations and of all classes, ever journeying to Calvary, which is become for evermore the world's centre; sinless souls, yet inflamed with penitential love; oppressed with the shame of others' sins, and determined to atone for them with Christ crucified. Penitent souls, glad to suffer and to die with Christ for their own offenses.

He is ever leading us on to Calvary. Take up the cross and follow Me, He says; no man can be My disciple unless he be crucified as I am going to be. My disciples are all crucified men. And thus the leader of all the elect leads them to crucifixion. The model upon whom all friends of God pattern their conduct in life and death is a crucified Man.

CHAPTER IV.

Jesus Suffers from the Wavering Faith of His Friends.

Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people; and how our chief priests and princes delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we hoped that it was He that should have redeemed Israel. . . . Then He said to them: O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken (Luke xxiv. 19-21, 25). At length He appeared to the eleven as they were at table; and He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart (Mark xvi. 14).

It is during the Way of the Cross that we may most appropriately meditate on the sorrow of Jesus for the loss of His good repute among His disciples. The glory sought after by human ambition, says St. Augustine, is ignominious glory. But the esteem of good men is a real glory; it ministers a holy joy and is a noble object of ambition. The society of affectionate and confiding friends is our foretaste of heaven, and their loyalty in time of trouble is almost indispensable to our own loyalty to God. For one to find himself doubted and suspected by men whom he loves is a hardship second only to misgivings about the favor of God Himself. To be misunderstood by my friends is often a greater hardship than to be hated by my enemies. In fact, my enemies' greatest triumph over me is often in cooling the affection and confidence of my friends.

That Jesus was extremely sensitive to this loss of the

confidence of His friends, is plain from various passages in His life. We remember how, after He had lost many disciples on account of His teaching of the real presence in holy communion, He turned with much emotion to His chosen Twelve and appealed to them: "Will you also go away?" (John vi. 68). It was the plea of a heart that craved the solace of faithful friendship. During His whole passion that heart was wrung with bitter sorrow by reason of the weakening of the allegiance of His Apostles and disciples. He felt it as much, perhaps, during the Way of the Cross as during any other part of His passion. He had reproached them the night before with that unfaithfulness, the pain of which He felt beforehand. Much of His long and touching discourse in the supper-room was intended to strengthen their faith in Him: "These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized" (John xvi. 1). And on the way to the Garden of Olives, "Jesus saith to them," no doubt with accents of great sorrow: "You will all be scandalized in My regard this night" (Mark xiv. 27). And so it had now happened. His only companions are the "two other malefactors," the all unwilling Simon the Cyrenian, and the pitiless soldiers and chief priests. His only sympathizers are pious women, whose sex saved them from the penalty attached to the crime of loving Him.

Jesus knew and deeply regretted that His Apostles were irritated against Him because He had not made any effort to be released from His enemies. This was their first feeling. But the feelings that followed this grieved Him yet more: He knew that they harbored doubts about His divine mission. He is seized—they must have said—dragged before the Jewish council, accused of heresy and

blasphemy, and what has been the result? What did He say or do in His defence? Did He work a single miracle? He seems to have lost that power. It is amazing, it is dreadful. He cannot even speak against His accusers—they have silenced Him, they have vanquished and mastered Him. We know that He is innocent of those awful crimes. But, poor Jesus, with all His great gifts, He was certainly somewhat visionary, and often indiscreet. He claimed too much for Himself, and it now looks as if He had been really under a delusion, about some things at least. And He was too headstrong. Why did He not follow our advice and keep out of Judea? (John xi. 8). Why could He not see that His prophesy of rising again from the grave was absurd? We are willing to believe anything possible, but He has asked us to believe incredible things.

Jesus knew full well that they were thinking thus, and were saying such things about Him among themselves. This was a great affliction to Him. They would, of course, feel that He had been treated most unjustly, but also that He had only Himself to blame. He had been extremely provoking in His public discourses. Now all is lost. We thought He would redeem Israel; He will be put to death by crucifixion this afternoon.

He knew well that they were faithful to Him. But it was now out of pity for a friend in misfortune, not out of steadfast allegiance to a Master temporarily obscured, but finally to be only the more gloriously triumphant. How could one—they asked—who was able to raise Himself from the dead, permit His enemies to condemn Him to death, to drag Him through the public streets manacled and with a rope around His neck, and then load Him with

a cross and hurry Him off, vanquished and helpless, and crucify Him?

To the common populace the final sentence of Pilate and the Way of the Cross were conclusive against Him. To His nearest friends (save His mother) his journey to Calvary was cause of gravest doubt about His mission and His claim to be the Son of God. None of Jesus' sufferings exceeded in intensity His consciousness of this.

This suspension of faith affected not only His Apostles, all of them, but also obscured the minds of such faithful friends as Magdalen. When, on the morning of the Resurrection, she saw the empty tomb, she did not think He had risen; she was concerned only with the disappearance of His dead body, which she had come to anoint; He would not rise again till the end of the world. They all suffered deeply from this conflict of love and of faith in their hearts; how much more deeply did not Jesus Himself suffer from the knowledge of their doubts and suspicions.

Let us not judge the friends of Jesus too harshly. He Himself would make every excuse for them. Well He knew that it is not easy for flesh and blood to understand the comparative value of silent suffering and positive resistance in the work of establishing the honor of God. Their reasoning seems weak to us; but we know all, and we have learned wisdom at their expense.

Which of us would have decided differently? Jesus was condemned by Annas, the lawful high priest; by Caiaphas, the intruded one, and by the high council of the Sanhedrin; tried and sentenced by Pilate, the Roman magistrate; mocked and despised by Herod, the native ruler; the whole Jewish people (so it looked) demanded

Barabbas instead of Jesus, whom they voted to be crucified—Jewish tribunals, Gentile tribunals, public opinion, all condemned Him. And before every court He had uttered scarcely a word in His own behalf, or did or said anything that could be really called a defence. Could He really be the Son of God, the only judge of the living and the dead?

Were it not for the awful eloquence of His dying words, and the convulsions of nature at His death, the on-lookers at His crucifixion, instead of saying: "Indeed, this Man was the Son of God," might rather have agreed that He was the son of perdition. His friends, as He was marched a captive to Calvary, overflowed indeed with pity for Him; but they were puzzled, hesitating, incredulous of His great claims; their faith could not stand the test He put it to.

With such thoughts would Jesus palliate their weakness, but He felt it none the less deeply. Hardly any deprivation left our Redeemer's heart so empty as the wavering of His friends. He felt greatly dishonored by them. He had been disgraced by the treason of Judas, the perjury of Peter, the perfidy of the Jewish judges, the cowardice of Pilate, the falling off of the multitude; He was dishonored by His death sentence and by the manner and the instrument of its execution on hangman's hill. Add this last and bitterest pang: He is dishonored by the suspicions of His friends.

Hence afterwards, and even in the glory of His risen life, He reproached them for it and upbraided them; calling it incredulity and hardness of heart, and, to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, foolishness and slowness of heart. No, no; I am not a visionary! I am divinely wise

in suffering the loss of all things. Why do you not remember that I am the Redeemer of mankind, and must, therefore, suffer for men's sins? For Me to suffer is God's highest wisdom. Learn that wisdom now, O ye slow of heart! that a Redeemer must die for the redeemed, and only thereby enter into His glory. My most splendid miracle is My crucifixion for My friends and My enemies. I had rather die and be dead for men's salvation, than remain alive and raise dead men to life for your edification. But you did not know Me well enough nor love Me tenderly enough to believe Me against all appearances; you would not believe Me on My word only.

And as Jesus journeyed on to Calvary, He went over His friends in His saddened mind with nervous eagerness, and one by one He found them all to be wanting. This shadowed His spirit with deeper gloom. It bruised Him worse than the fists of His torturers and it shamed Him worse than the spittle they voided upon His face; to be forced to own this: to My best loved friends, save only one, I am not the Son of God.

Save only one. How much dearer His mother was to Him for her solitary fidelity. She never wavered for a single instant. She had pondered these things in her heart (Luke ii. 19), from the very day that she gave Him birth, and especially ever since the prophecy of Simeon (Luke ii. 35). But, she alone excepted, all were gone and lost to Jesus in the supremely essential trial of faith in His divinity.

This incredulity of the Apostles Jesus turned later on greatly to their advantage. The reproaches He made to them personally, and the bitterness of their remorse added wonderfully to the strength of their faith. It is a curious

fact that even the supremely necessary virtue of Christian faith is stronger after being sorely tempted than when cultivated amid every human inducement to believe. Or, better said, the reasons for believing are not so well appreciated in time of spiritual peace as during the peril of mental conflict, and especially after reason and grace have won their hard earned victory over temptation to doubt.*

*And in our own day Jesus would by this part of His sufferings enlighten and strengthen the souls of men, against the infection of doubt and the misgivings of over-curious reasoning about His character and His mission. He would provide us an antidote against religious indifferentism, that is to say, disregard of the dogmatic certainty of faith, and especially about His personal attributes and His teaching. Fancy, if you can, Jesus saying, on His way to Calvary: It makes little difference what My followers believe about Me personally and about My teaching, as long as they love Me.

CHAPTER V.

Jesus is Dishonored in the Eyes of the Jewish People.

And they led Him away to crucify Him. And bearing His own cross He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha. And there were also two other malefactors led with Him to be put to death (Matt. xxvii. 31; Luke xxiii. 32; John xix. 17).

The loss of His repute as Son of God among His disciples and near friends was, as we have seen, a deep affliction to Jesus. But He knew their good hearts; His mother was among them, and He would see them all again and restore, and more than restore, their allegiance. But the loss of His good name among the Jewish people generally was a far more serious affliction to Him.

Here is how it looked to them. For a long time this Rabbi, Jesus, and the chief men in the Jewish nation were rival suitors for men's esteem. For a time Jesus had won the day: "The whole world goeth after Him" (John xii. 19). But now at the end, He has been detected as a monstrous impostor and seducer, instead of a messenger from heaven. Men said: We did the Pharisees and scribes injustice; they were right in warning us; we ran after a false prophet.

Thus our Redeemer suffered the agony, not only of losing His good name among the masses of men, but of acquiring an evil name—and that the worst possible. Instead of the Son of God, He is a terrible enemy of God;

He is an awful blasphemer. Instead of doing the heavenly Father's work, His miracles are of the devil himself. He said the devil was our father, and it has been proved in open court that He is Himself the servant of the evil one, the foremost in the whole world. He prated about peace, and He really brought among us nothing but trouble, divisions, factions, and the interference of the alien tyranny; is it not all too plain? Is it not true that He has been fairly tried and by the highest judges, and justly condemned? And who in the end was this Man's best and in fact only friend? The Roman governor, a brutal pagan tyrant, an adorer of false gods; and even he finally abandoned Him and condemned Him to death. He richly deserves it. He has betrayed the confidence of a whole nation, and that nation the chosen people of God.

How could Jesus endure this? His Gospel, the Father's masterwork of love and power, is shown forth as a huge imposture, and His true and only Son a hypocrite of unheard-of vileness. That celestial way of life, that divine teaching, so elevated and pure, that religion which is a miracle of love, that glorious promise of the new birth of mankind, all falsified by the most overwhelming of all arguments, the bloody and disgraceful end of the Man who is its only exponent and its chosen hero.

Oh, what a mystery is the cross of Christ! Oh, how marvelous is the power of God's love, which can achieve a divine triumph over all the might of men and devils by the degradation and crucifixion of His only-begotten Son.

But not only did Jesus suffer from the general persuasion that He was the greatest enemy of God that ever lived, but from an attendant misery—the chief priests and their associates were universally praised as God's

foremost friends, fearless and vigilant pastors, wise enough to detect and expose the cleverest of impostors, true guardians of the people's faith—these betrayers of the people, these apostates from the law and the prophets of God. It was these good and holy men (everybody was saying) who brought this false wretch to justice, in spite of His devil's miracles. How much do we not owe to them for their zeal for religion, their love of good order, their persistent prosecution of this arch-traitor to our race and faith?

And this did Jesus feel as His disgrace was consummated by the journey to Calvary. His body, all wounded and bruised, did but feebly represent the state of his soul under the maledictions of the Jews. They scourged Him with their tongues, and slew him with their curses. The sound of the hammers on the nails, marking the pain of pierced flesh and torn nerves, would not be so painful as the sounds He now heard, and had heard all that forenoon, all the previous night, from His fellow-countrymen, uttering in His own language, and in most ferocious tones, every evil wish of hearts that hated Him far beyond their power of expression, and at the same time proclaiming the praises of men most deserving of reprobation.

Who that calls himself a follower of Christ will after this strive for public fame, except to refer it all to the glory of Him who chose for our sakes to be thus dishonored? In my moments of fervor I offer God my life and my death. And my reputation? Have I the courage to offer that for God's honor? Could I be content to be disgraced, rated all unjustly as an impostor and a heretic, and then slip silently away and die in obscurity,

the cloud never lifted? Jesus, my patron in all things, suffered worse than that. For being in the form of God, and it being no robbery for Him to claim equality with God (Phil. ii. 6), He yet positively offered Himself as the victim of our sins, willing to be accused of our blasphemies and heresies, willing to atone for our sensualities and envies, and for our every other shameful offence. This He did for us all, including His immediate enemies, the most malicious, ungrateful and cruel beings who ever lived.

PART V.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

CHAPTER I.

On Calvary.

And they bring Him into the place called Golgotha, which, being interpreted, is the place of Calvary. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh. And when He had tasted, He would not drink. And it was the third hour* (Matt. xxvii. 33, 34; Mark xv. 22, 23, 25; Luke xxiii. 33; John xix. 17).

The Way of the Cross is done. Calvary is reached, and Jesus lays down His heavy burden. With a deep sigh of relief He drops it from His weary shoulders. Simon of Cyrene is dismissed with grateful looks, and with words of heartfelt thanks.

There lies the cross of Jesus upon the ground; He looks upon it and He reveres it. He thinks how soon He will be fastened to it and die upon it. It means everything to Him, and to us. It is to both the Redeemer and the redeemed the emblem of most perfect love. "Greater love than this" (He remembers well this teaching to His disciples) "hath no man, than that a man should give his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). And what man has ever done for His friends a thousandth part of what Jesus has done for His enemies?

*When St. Mark says that the time of the crucifixion was "the third hour," he means that the interval called by the Jews the third hour, namely, that between nine o'clock and noon, was not yet completed, or that it was as yet the third hour.

The cross means both His deepest desolation of soul, and His most intolerable pain of body—His expiring agony. And it means His entire triumph over all that is false and evil. The cross shall be His favorite memorial among His followers, and shall at last be the sign in the heavens to announce His second coming (Matt. xxiv. 30). Its power over men shall be sacramental, instilling into their souls, as they gaze upon it or kiss it, the grace of devoted friendship for their Redeemer and for their fellow-men.

Jesus looks, oh, with what intensity of interest, at the nails and the hammers, and at the men digging the hole for His gibbet. He lifts His eyes towards the skies, shut and barred against His longing soul. He looks about Him into the faces of the leading conspirators, some scowling with hate, some grinning with triumphant malice. He casts a kindly glance at the Roman soldiers, and His eyes rest upon the officer in charge of His execution, who returns the glance with a curious gaze, and perhaps asks a pitiful question or two. This is the pagan centurion, who is to be made a Christian three hours later by the very death which he is now bringing about.

The sun was just at the turn of his daily course as Jesus arrived at Calvary, and at sunset the greatest festival of the Jewish religion would begin. Whilst He sadly prepares for the final throes of His atonement, the people of Israel are expecting all the heavenly joy of this great Passover. We have followed Him "outside the gate" (Heb. xiii. 12), literally an outcast and ex-communicate from the Holy City and from the elect race of the Hebrews. Let us now with all sympathy meditate

upon His wonderful death. We are on Calvary, the holiest spot in the world. May all its significance of hope and love be for our soul's instruction and purification.

"And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh. And when He had tasted He would not drink." It seems to have been a custom at Jerusalem thus to solace and strengthen culprits just before execution. The humane persons who thus ministered to dying criminals did not make an exception against Jesus; let it be recorded in their favor. And Jesus recognized their kindness. He tasted the wine, and that with lips already burning with the thirst which would yet wrench from His soul a loud cry of pain. He tasted, but He would not drink. Then why taste? I wish we knew all the reasons. I wish we could understand the depth of His purpose in every single act given us in this most absorbing history; but many of the woes of the passion are as yet hidden from us. Who will begin a devotion to "the unknown sorrows of Jesus"?—to quote an expression of the old English Catholic poet, Richard Crashaw. The deeper depths of His sufferings will remain unknown, till we taste them turned into joy in His heavenly Kingdom.

But Jesus, if He refused to drink, yet tasted the offered cup. This was to show, perhaps, His thanks for it, in accordance with His gentle nature, always grateful for favors. And He returned the wine without drinking, as a thrifty trader carefully saves all his means for his greater ventures; so does this purchaser of our eternal freedom save His thirst and increase its store of pain against the final payment of our ransom at His

death, accumulating three more hours of fiery thirst. So, with thanks, he tasted of the soothing drink, and no more; just as later on He refused the vinegar in the very article of death. This was not done with the mere stoic's boastful defiance of bodily pain. Just the reverse; for He loved pain, and He was thirsting to thirst for us, that we, at the last, might all drink deep of the delights of God's house (Ps. xxxv. 9). And perhaps He said, as He returned the cup, give this wine to the "other malefactors," My companions in misfortune, and let it serve to increase their own share.

Furthermore, our Redeemer refused the wine because it might dull His sense of pain, inner and outer. He had been in full use of His faculties all through His passion, as His answers to the chief priest, to Pilate, and to the women of Jerusalem plainly showed; not even the dreadful scourging had benumbed His senses. No solace of wine for Me, He would say to Himself; must I not drink the dregs of another cup? Must not I preach my sermon from that pulpit soon to be erected? I must hold My mind all open and free to My dying breath, that at last I may say of My task in all truth: It is finished.

CHAPTER II.

Jesus is Stripped.

The soldiers, therefore, when they had crucified Him, took His garments (and they made four parts, to every soldier a part), and also His coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said then one to another: Let us not cut it, but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of by the prophet, saying: They divided My garments among them; and upon My vesture they cast lots. And the soldiers, indeed, did these things (Matt. xxvii. 35; Mark xv. 24; Luke xxiii. 34; John xix. 23, 24).

We can suppose no delay in the soldiers' work at Calvary. As soon as the cross was placed on the ground in a position convenient for being raised, and the hole for it had been dug, Jesus was stripped of His clothes. First they took off His "coat," which means the outer garment covering His whole form like a gown, reaching nearly to His feet. And then they quickly, and doubtless with little ceremony of kindness, took off His simple under garments, and He stood before them entirely naked. Many think with probability that a cloth was then wrapped about our Redeemer's loins, such being the Roman custom at crucifixions; and it is commonly believed that He wore His crown of thorns till His death. He had already been twice stripped that day, and each time re clothed. This time He is stripped finally and forever. And much more painfully than before, because now, from His bruised condition, every movement of

His body was very painful. And His wounds were sore, and in some places adhered to His under garments; many of His stripes must have begun to bleed afresh.

It is no pious fiction that when Jesus was stripped of His garments they stuck to the wounds inflicted by the scourges, and tore the flesh when again taken off. It must have been so. Bind up a fresh wound without ointment or lint, and in half an hour the bandage is pasted tight, and can only be withdrawn with great pain and renewed loss of blood.

Thus were His holy body and limbs laid bare before that hateful, vulgar crowd, a sad sight of wounds and bruises. Jesus was naked before them; but yet clothed with a mantle of ineffable purity, decked with the royal purple of His blood. How adorable He was to the angels. The invisible Seraphim gather around Him, awestruck with His beauty and His dignity, the cuts and swellings only adding new glory to His form and new fervor to their adoration, for His wounds witness to the yet greater beauty of the generous soul within.

Wonderfully did the body of this naked Man breathe out the Infinite purity of God the Father and the Immaculate purity of the virgin mother. Chastity is now to be a virtue triumphantly established over the animal lusts of men by His stripping and His death. And let it be noted that if avarice had gained a foothold among Jesus' disciples, He had completely barred out lust from them.

As He is stripped Jesus gives away, and gladly (for He is the willing victim of His spoilers), His last earthly possessions—except His earthly life and body; He parts with His raiment. He was a workingman, and all His

clothes were homespun, and were made in the quiet cottage at Nazareth, both spun and woven by his own mother; they were of no great worth, but He valued them for her sake. And He is unclothed of the work of her hands, to be immediately clothed with our shame and wickedness, namely, His cross.

Thus was Jesus reduced to the last condition of poverty, a virtue He had loved with the plainest preference. And in willing to be crucified Jesus purposely chose a death in which not even His clothes would be left Him. His clothes were not soft or luxurious, but they were all He owned, and now they are gone. Nothing of earth is left Him. His poverty will be complete when His body at last is wrenched away from His soul by death.

The poor Man of Nazareth is now the poor Man of Calvary. Dwelling He had none since His baptism by John, nor money. Honor and friends are gone. His last meal was the Last Supper, given Him by a charitable friend in the city. The gift of wine mingled with myrrh was to be His last taste of food of any kind—"and when He had tasted He would not drink"—except the vinegar they were to offer Him nearer to His end.

The virtue of Christian poverty, all new in this world of selfish greed, was thus well taught by Jesus at His stripping. His religion is one of total detachment from the goods of this world, at least in our interior life. And He counsels external and actual separation from them, both their ownership and use, as far as Providence will permit. How necessary this virtue is to us in our struggle against our mortal foes, Jesus knew full well. "When we come to the battle of faith," says St. Gregory

the Great, as quoted by the Church in the Breviary, "we undertake to wrestle with the malign spirits, and these possess nothing of this world's goods. We should be stripped naked if we hope to overcome these naked adversaries. For if one who is clothed wrestles with one who is naked, he is all the more quickly thrown to the ground because he may the more easily be seized hold of. And what, in fact, are all earthly possessions, except a kind of bodily clothing? Whoever, therefore, steps forth to wrestle with the devil, should first cast off these garments lest he be vanquished."

What the world chiefly prides itself on is practical good sense, as in contrast with the visionary principles of devout Christians, especially those of humility and poverty. Against the world Christ showed an unvarying and uncompromising antagonism. Its riches He spurned, its maxims of self-interest He anathematized, its pleasures He condemned. He was especially anxious to emphasize all this at the end of His life by the poverty of His last hours. He gave up all that He had in the world by His stripping, which Providence made a very public ceremony on Mount Calvary. He left everything behind Him with His poor clothes at the foot of the cross. To worldlings this is mere stripping and nothing else, to praise it seems to them utter folly: "To those that are saved, that is to us, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I. Cor. i. 24).

Having stripped Jesus of His clothes, the soldiers laid them apart till they had finished their work, nailed Him to the cross, and lifted it up. Thus it was from the cross, after "they had crucified Him," that He saw them dividing their spoil among them, and throwing dice for

the ownership of the "coat," the largest and best piece. These four soldiers were the ones Jesus knew best, and loved best, being the four who were the actual executioners; the others were the main body of the centurion's detachment, and therefore about a hundred in number, whose duty it was to escort the "malefactors" to their execution and guard the place till all was done. It seems that the four men who personally did the dreadful work received the victim's clothes as their perquisite.

So they threw dice for His outer garment, His Rabbi's gown. It was the same holy vesture of which the afflicted woman had truly said: "If I shall but touch His garment, I shall be made whole" (Mark v. 28). This seamless coat was doubtless His mother's masterpiece. And as Jesus saw them handling it, and heard them arguing about it, and then saw them throwing dice for it, tender memories of Nazareth and of Mary and of the sacred past mingled with His awful pains. But He was glad that He had something left to give away, especially as it was worth disputing about; and above all because it was to go to those who were the closest of all mankind to His death, His great act of atoning love.

The soldier who was fortunate enough to win the cast of the dice, may have thought that he had only a gambler's title to that garment, which, no doubt, he hoped to sell at a high price to Jesus' disciples as a relic of their Master. Little did he appreciate that its owner, as He saw him win it, gladly gave it to him, gladly would give him His heart's blood. While the soldiers divided His last earthly possessions, Jesus prayed His Father to give them all the riches of Paradise.

Perhaps the soldier, after he had won his prize, and in

the joy of his success, tried the garment on. Jesus, as He saw him do it, would long to clothe the poor creature with His very soul and body. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. xiii. 14), is an expression of the Apostle. I clothe thee and all My executioners with Myself, Jesus would murmur. I am all thine without casting lots. May thy mind be clothed with light uncreated, thy heart arrayed in infinite love—I am thy light, I am thy joy, if thou wilt but have Me so. I will give thee not only My raiment, but My body and My blood, My soul and My divinity.

"O Jesus," exclaims Ludolph the Saxon, "who before Thy crucifixion didst vouchsafe to be stripped of Thy clothes and exposed naked in the sight of all, grant that I may be stripped of all worldly things, in so far as they are contrary to my salvation, so that I may naked follow Thee crucified naked on the bare cross."

CHAPTER III.

"Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

And Pilate wrote a title also, the inscription of His cause, and he put it on the cross over His head. And the writing was: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. This title, therefore, many of the Jews did read; because the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate: Write not, the King of the Jews; but that He said, I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered: What I have written, I have written (Matt. xxvii. 37; Mark xv. 26; Luke xxiii. 38; John xix. 19-22).

It is probable that the inscription or title, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," was written by Pilate after he had passed sentence, and while the cross was being prepared. Jesus carried it about His neck on the Way of the Cross, as some surmise, or, according to others, it was borne by one of the soldiers. And it was while Jesus was being stripped that it was affixed to the cross, being placed above the point where the upright and the cross-beam came together. Our Redeemer was glad of this inscription. My name and My office, He would say, are now nailed where I shall soon be nailed; the King's own self and the King's royal title shall be seen together in death.

Both of the thieves had their titles also nailed to their crosses, stating each one's crime and giving his miserable name, so that our Lord's inscription was one of three

criminal appellations fixed to three gibbets. He was not ashamed of this association of His name and title with those of common outlaws, though it all would read to a stranger thus: one malefactor's crime is robbery, and another's is the same; but the crime of this middle one is the strange offense that He is the King of the Jews.

Yes; the crime of Jesus is that He is the King of the Jews. If he had repudiated that title He would not now be crucified. As He had always done before, so now He willingly avows, publicly proclaims, I am the King of the Jews, lawful monarch of the people whose rulers have crucified Me and whose multitudes have rejected Me; that is what I am and what I shall remain forever. There is a promise of future mercy for Israel in this persistent purpose of Christ to be and forever to remain their King, "For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29).

Pilate wrote the title in the three great languages of the human race, and he did this singular act under divine compulsion, for only the Syro-Chaldaic, which was the Jews' dialect of the Hebrew tongue, was necessary for publishing any event in Jerusalem. The Roman governor thus unwittingly made Jesus King of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. And, indeed, it was only because He was King of the Jews that He was King of all men, for the Hebrew race was not chosen by God for its own glory, but for that of all nations, and its glory is its King, Jesus of Nazareth.

The three languages had yet another significance. For Latin was the speech of the great power among men, and Greek was the tongue of the learned, but Hebrew was that of heavenly promise. Therefore, wisdom and

power and hope are all in that triple-tongued heraldry of the cross, but each wonderfully transformed. As to power: "The word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is to us, it is the power of God" (I. Cor. i. 18). As to wisdom: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? . . . The Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness" (*Ibid.* i. 20, 23). As to the hope of Israel, Jesus was its perfect fulfilment; yet because of pride they nailed Him to a cross, which became the Jews' stumbling block.

The wisdom of dying for the salvation of friend and foe is in the name Jesus, which means a Savior. The most invincible force ever known is that of Christ's love of God and man, which shall yet overturn the mighty empire of Rome by the martyrs' faith in Jesus crucified. And the promise given of old to the Hebrew fathers, is now made good in the death of Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Therefore, by these universal and eternal languages, every tongue shall confess that Jesus is the King of Kings, and is in the glory of God the Father (Phil. ii. 11); that the King of the Jews suffered to save the people of every race, and that from His cross on Calvary He shall rule over all mankind.

By race and religion Jesus is Hebrew, by perfection of wisdom He is Greek, by conquest of the world He is Roman. And, as He sees His title fixed fast and firm to His royal throne of suffering, He feels how firmly He is binding all these races and all other men together into the one holy brotherhood of His Church by His crucifixion.

This three-fold proclamation means that "There is now no distinction of the Jew and the Greek, for the same is Lord of all, rich unto all that call on Him" (Rom. x. 12). Salvation is to be made universal, and every cry to God, in whatever tongue it is uttered, will receive a rich and an eternal gift in response, and this is the whole meaning of Calvary.

Very differently felt the Jewish rulers. To them no race was equal to theirs in God's eyes. And especially Jesus was to them a mock king. The very word king, used in any connection with Jesus, made them uneasy, even though written above a head crowned with thorns and a form enthroned on a gibbet. They, therefore, hurried to Pilate, as soon as they discovered what the inscription was, and demanded a different title, one that would read that Jesus had claimed that He was King. They felt that the whole scene would show plainly enough what had become of His claim. But Pilate stood to his inscription, or rather God held him to it: "What I have written, I have written," he said, and dismissed them.

They were willing to have him write, Tiberius Cæsar, King of the Jews. They had themselves written it eternally on the very skies by their proclamation to earth and heaven an hour before—"We have no king but Cæsar"—a heathen king and a tyrant, an emperor full of war and rapine and murder, rather than Jesus, Son of David, Son of God, and Prince of Peace. Cæsar's first act as their new king was to yield to their clamor and crucify Jesus, their rightful King; and his second act is to force them to read his proclamation nailed to a dreadful sign board, written in three languages, that Jesus of Nazareth is King of the Jews—their King, now and forever more. If you

say that this was a dispute all about words, yet they were words of miraculous power, and this the Jews felt in spite of themselves, as Pilate did not; he meant only to insult them.

The Jews rejected Jesus by spoken words, and He, however rudely they thrust Him from them, yet clings to them; and though deposed from His throne of honor, mounts His throne of shame, and tells all nations in their three principal tongues and in letters never to be effaced, being nailed to His symbol of eternal love, that He is still and forever a King; that of His many titles of honor, the one that He most prefers, whether among Jews or Greeks, Romans or barbarians, is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

Notice that during His trial, Pilate called our Redeemer by His own name, Jesus. Not so the chief priests and their followers; not once or in any part of the proceedings did they use the name Jesus. They called Him: "This Man," "That seducer," and, only in scornful irony, "King of the Jews." They were afraid of His name. They had rather strike His face than call His name. There is a divine spell in the name of Jesus, which even they dared not challenge by pronouncing it; no, not even when they asked Pilate to change the title. And if it must be named and written, they would couple it with fraud and usurpation, and they would have Pilate, their unwilling tool, their reluctant helper in the murder of Jesus, aid them in blackening His name by a final act of cowardice. Pilate refused, and, we are certain, greatly to their discomfiture.

Pilate positively refused to alter, add to, or take from the title he had given Jesus. "What I have written, I

have written," he said. He wrote better than he knew. He wrote as he did, indeed, to annoy the Jews, whom he dared not otherwise resist; but by his hand God wrote in the holiest place on earth the most worshipful name under heaven, that one only name by the power of which men can be saved (Acts iv. 12). The Jewish rulers had been more than willing that Pilate should hang Jesus. They must perforce—so he insisted—allow him now to name His offense—it is that He is their King. "Pilate," says St. Augustine, "wrote what he wrote, because Christ had said what He had said": I am Jesus, a Savior; I am come to save that which was lost; "thou sayest I am King of the Jews—I am." And now His claim of Kingship is made perfect by dying for His rebellious subjects, and in the very act of dying saying that He is their King.

The name of Jesus had come to Him with the shedding of blood. It was given Him by Mary and Joseph at the command of His heavenly Father, for as they cut the infant Redeemer with the knife of circumcision, "His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel, before He was conceived in the womb" (Luke ii. 21). And now at the end of His life His name is written in blood, and amid bitter contention, and is nailed to a gallows tree. But it is our dearest hope, indeed it is our own name; for Jesus gives us that name to pay our eternal debt with.

When a man writes his name on his friend's promise to pay money, it is often the seal of his own financial ruin, because he thereby goes surety for another man's debt. Jesus became my surety with my creditor, who is my offended God. He wrote upon my body of sin and upon my soul of iniquity, I assume this man's debt, here is My

signature, and I seal it with this cross in My blood: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

In cases between friend and friend, where the debt is unpaid by the debtor and then paid by his surety, it is often a sign that both are ruined men. But in the case of Jesus going on my bond, I am saved and He is ruined; He is bankrupt of goods and friends for me, home and country, even His very life is forfeit for my sake. But the third day is the day of grace, when both He and I are gloriously to be enriched: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich He became poor, for your sakes; that through His poverty you might be rich" (II. Cor. viii. 9); "Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross" (Coll. ii. 14). With His name my name is affixed to the cross, and my sins, written beneath it, are blotted out by His blood.

Thus the adorable name of Jesus is offered to God with our names when our debt is demanded for payment in the divine court, and thereby payment is made for us. It is in this way that every man is named for Jesus, as a subject for his King, as a debtor for his surety, as a brother for the first-born in the family. "Praise ye His name, for the Lord is sweet, His mercy endureth forever, and His truth to generation and generation" (Ps. xcix. 5).

CHAPTER IV.

Jesus and the Two Thieves.

And there were also two other malefactors led with Him to be put to death. And with Him they crucified the robbers, one on the right hand, and the other on the left, and Jesus in the midst. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith: And with the wicked He was reputed (Matt. xxvii. 38; Mark xv. 27, 28; Luke xxiii. 32, 33; John xix. 18).

It is a piece of good luck (so must have thought the conspirators) that two thieves have been condemned to die this same day; our enemy will have the right sort of company at Golgotha. Men will say: Here is just an ordinary execution of common outlaws—this Jesus is no high-class offender, but a malefactor dying among “other malefactors.” Only this difference: we have nicknamed Him the King of the Jews.

Is it not strange that Jesus quite agreed with them? He thanks His Father’s providence for all its loving disposal of events, but He does so with especial fervor for this one. For as among the different classes of men there is one known as the criminal class, so to this class did Jesus will to belong in His last hours. To be reputed in the sight of heaven and earth a sinner among sinners, is the essence of His atoning purpose. He is glad that the trial and execution of the “two other malefactors” was overruled from above and so timed that He might have at His death the kind of company He loved best in life. He felt most at home thus (if we may so say). If there

was any solace to His misery on the way to Calvary, and during His crucifixion, it was in the company He had close about Him—"two other malefactors," "one on the right hand and the other on the left, and Jesus in the midst," that He might die to save them; many scoffing enemies passing back and forth, that He might pray for them and save them; His immaculate mother, that He might bestow her as His parting gift upon all sinners to be their dearest friend to intercede for them and help to save them.

Is He not the sinner's man? Has He not set Himself apart to die for sinners? Then give Him leave to die between "two other malefactors." God's love for us took the form of identifying His Divine Son with us sinners in life and in death: shall He consort with us in life, but not in death? Who would not wish to die surrounded by those He loved best?

And we can but faintly imagine how deeply He loved His fellow-culprits, with what tenderness of sympathy He forgot His own pains as He saw them nailed to their crosses; how shocked He was at their curses and their defiance of the executioners. And how eagerly He debated in His mind His plans to move them to repentance.

O Jesus! What love is Thine for us "other malefactors." Oh, how little does he know of love who has not learned Thy love for sinners by studying the lessons of Calvary. How little has he loved who has not shared Thy love for sinners.

We direct the devout reader's attention, therefore, to the curious expression of the Evangelist about the two thieves, who were our Redeemer's fellow-crossbearers on His journey to Calvary, and were crucified on either side

of Him, for they are spoken of as "two other malefactors." A carefully chosen expression, describing how the condemned men looked as grouped together journeying to Calvary, being, all three of them, men of the same class and kind: "And there were also two other malefactors led with Him to be put to death." It had been a constant reproach to Jesus that "This Man receiveth sinners" (Luke xv. 2); and the Pharisees demanded of His disciples: "Why doth your Master eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" (Mark ii. 16). What amazement to find that He is glad even to die with them.

When the Pharisees called Jesus the friend of sinners, little did they imagine how absolutely true was the title. Pilate's superscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," was not more true than the loud-speaking fact of Jesus' position, being the middle place between the two thieves: King of the Jews and friend and associate of sinners. Of the two titles He would surrender the latter no more willingly than the former. One thief He saves, and He would hang a whole age on His gibbet to save the other. He was the best friend Barabbas, the robber, ever had or could have. At Simon's banquet He had rather be the friend of the woman that was a sinner than be reputed a prophet (Luke vii. 39). Let every one of us duly appreciate this. He is my friend, my only friend, my friend unto death; and it is for me, a sinner, that He came into the world, lived, taught, organized His Church, and died. "A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief" (I. Tim. i. 15).

The reproach of being fond of sinners He considered praise, and He did all he could to deserve it. He ban-

quetted with them, lodged with them, heartily thanked a woman "who is a sinner" for anointing Him for His burial. No wonder, then, that He now chooses to die as a sinner, and between "two other malefactors," His ruling passion strong in death—a kind of death allotted only to the vilest sinners. In view of all this, had not we better reconsider our own contempt for the wicked, we who are students of the lessons of Calvary?

And He was given the place among the criminals that he preferred, the most prominent place, the place of honor. Jesus knew very well that men would ask, which of these is Jesus of Nazareth? and that the answer would be: The middle one, as being the worst criminal of the three. This malefactor, Jesus of Nazareth, evidently outranks the other two in wickedness.

Each one of us and all mankind have a superabundant share in the cross of Christ. But it is certain that the class known as "sinners," that is to say, the notoriously bad, the hardened, obstinate, relapsed, brutish, boastful, arrogant, scoffing sinners, the ones about whom their friends despair, who are not only wicked but are the shameless railers at virtue and religion in others—it is certain that these are the ones for whom Jesus has a partiality, and these have a greater share in His cross than ordinary sinners. Hence, too, His title over His head, King of the Jews. For the Jews were the leading sinners against His Father in the whole world, and His own foremost enemies.

At the last day Jesus will give the just their eternal kingdom because they visited Him in prison: "Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand: Come ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For

. . . I was in prison, and you came to Me" (Matt. xxv. 34, 36). For He, belonging by both the appointment of His Father and His own choice to the criminal class, says to us: Pity them and you pity Me. If, therefore, a man is conscious of high endowments of nature or special gifts of grace, God would have him on that very account cultivate a tender pity for sinners. And among both the innocent and the penitent friends of Jesus, the choicest spirits devote themselves wholly to saving their wicked brethren, as being their Master's favorites, sinners the most totally abandoned, despised and outlawed.

Another lesson is that the best means of saving hardened sinners is preaching Christ crucified to them. It is indeed true that the terrors of the divine wrath should generally (though not always) introduce the appeal of the cross. But the love of Jesus crucified for sinners is the most powerful motive ever known to move men to repentance, as it is the most essentially necessary for obtaining pardon; and it remains the only reliable one if perseverance is to be secured.

CHAPTER V.

Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross.

And they crucified Him (Matt. xxvii. 35; Mark xv. 24; Luke xxii. 33; John xix. 18).

But [Thomas] said to them: Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe. And after eight days, again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said: Peace be to you. Then He said to Thomas: Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side, and be not faithless but believing. Thomas answered and said to Him: My Lord and my God (John xx. 25-28).

It is most commonly believed that our Redeemer was fastened to His cross before it was raised up. And it is a revealed truth that He was nailed to His cross and not merely tied to it, for, after His resurrection, both He and His Apostle, Thomas, speak of the marks of the nails. But it is quite possible that He was also fastened with ropes, which would prevent the weight of His body from tearing His hands loose from the nails. As to the feet of Jesus, many think it probable that each was separately nailed to the cross.

On arriving at Calvary the place was quickly cleared of the surging crowds, the cross was lifted from our Redeemer's shoulders and placed upon the ground; no more than a moment was spent in offering Him and the two thieves their cup of wine, and then each one was imme-

diately stripped and laid upon his gibbet. Jesus lay there flat upon His back, His arms drawn out along the beam of the cross. He saw them getting ready the nails and adjusting them to His hands, in order to fix Him to His tree of shame. As they stretched His arms and hands, their scowling faces were brought down close to His own, sadly enough disfigured, but yet always kind. He did not turn away His eyes from their hard, brutish features as they did their dreadful work. We would fain believe that as they wounded His hands with hammer and nails he wounded their hearts with His affectionate glances, all full of pity and expressive of entire forgiveness. The wounds of love are more fatal to hate than those of hate to love. Perhaps He even spoke some words of pardon to them, as He certainly pleaded for them with His Father in His silent prayers.

And thus they nail Him. They press a heavy nail, or rather it must have been a long spike, hard against the palm of one of His hands, which is held fast by a soldier, while another one strikes with all his force. Down falls the hammer; again and again it quickly strikes, and the blunt point is forced amid the spurting blood through the centre of the hand and into the wood, driven by repeated strokes deeper and deeper, till it is driven home, and its broad flat head rests closely upon the palm of our Redeemer's hand. It is no easy matter to drive a great nail through such a substance as a human, living hand. But the soldiers are doubtless well practised in the art of crucifixion. One hand is soon nailed, then the other, and then each foot. As the nails passed through the beam on the other side it is probable that the points were bent back and clinched. It is possible that in nailing our Redeem-

er's feet they pierced them first with a dagger, in order to make easy way for the nails. At any rate, He was at last nailed, hands and feet, to His cross.

We can only leave the devout reader to His own sympathies to realize how Jesus suffered by the nailing. From the un pitying faces of the executioners, He, in His torture, raised His glances upward in entire resignation to the Divine Will. His soul pierced the gloom spread over Him by that infinite justice, of which He was the victim, and He regarded His Father with the eye of steadfast faith; He knew His Father's love and He adored it, most confidently, most humbly, but, oh! most sadly.

We must suppose that during the nailing Jesus was gripped tight by the four executioners in order to hold Him quiet during the excruciating pain. But this precaution was not necessary. He doubtless shrunk and quivered at each blow, but He submitted absolutely; He had rather a thousand times be nailed than be set free. He made not the least effort to release Himself, nor uttered a single word of complaint. No sound from His lips, probably none from any source, broke the awful stillness, except the strokes of the hammer. And now He lies fastened upon His hard bed, His deathbed. And His head rests upon His painful pillow, His crown of thorns.

Nail His hands. He has toiled with them from childhood; they were strong and hard and sinewy, the hands of a true workingman, who had laboriously earned for His mother a modest living. He now gladly fills them with nails and with pain and with flowing blood, and He pays with these His earnings, our ransom to His Father. Nail His feet. They were never weary in the quest of souls, always swift in bearing heaven's message of peace,

restless and eager in pursuit of fugitives from His Father's love. They have now found the only rest they ever craved—nailed to the cross, the token of God's supreme love for sinners.

The posture they have given Him is one of invitation, very strikingly so. He would say to the executioners: Stretch out My arms wide, even till the joints are strained, and nail Me fast by My outspread, open hands, that I may invite all who love and all who hate to come to Me, that I may fold them in My embrace and make them all My friends.

And He is in a posture of generous giving: My hands are open and emptied of all but My blood and the nails that have started it—hands nailed open, oh, sinners! and always dripping blood, your most precious treasure: Come to Me all, accept forgiveness from My pierced hands, and be saved. What better choice could Jesus make than to be nailed in an attitude of unbounded welcome: "Come to me all" (Matt. xi. 28).

A stern lesson of steadfastness in love is taught by the sacred nails. They served St. Paul for a strong figure of speech: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross" (Gal. ii. 19)—literally, an iron resolution of fidelity to a penitential life. The Apostle would say—and are we not all of the same mind?—I am fastened to a life of shame, of sorrow, and of self-denial, as firmly as Christ was fastened by nails to the cross.

One of our Redeemer's seven sacraments (James v. 14) is the anointing of the hands and feet and all the senses of the Christian, in the article of death, with sacred oil, the priest offering meanwhile the prayer of faith for the pardon of his every sin, by whatever sense committed.

So Jesus suffered in His every sense and limb and member for our universal sinfulness. He was affronted and shocked in His eyes by the sight of His enemies; His tongue was palsied by the charity of His silence; His ears were insulted by dreadful blasphemies; His nostrils were offended by the foul odors of Golgotha; His hands and feet were dug with nails; His heart was broken in life and pierced in death. All this He suffered, in order that the sacrament of the last anointing, and every other sacrament of the dying and the living, might be the anointing of His blood for the saving of sinners. He would anoint our every sense and limb and thought and act with His love to atone for every sin we have committed.

“O Jesus, mortify and crucify us with Thee. Let us never sin by hand or foot, by eyes or mouth, or by head or heart. Let all our senses be a sacrifice to Thee; let every member sing Thy praise. Let the sacred blood which flowed from Thy five wounds anoint us with such sanctifying grace, that we may die to the world, and live only to Thee” (Newman’s *Meditations and Devotions*).

CHAPTER VI.

Jesus is Lifted up on the Cross.

They crucified Him (Matt. xxvii. 35; Mark xv. 24; Luke xxii. 33; John xix. 18).

"They have dug My hands and feet, they have numbered all My bones" (Ps. xxi. 18). Thus Jesus felt when, having been nailed to the cross and made one thing with it, He and His cross were moved to the place prepared and lifted up. Every stir of the gibbet was a sharp pain to him; every nerve suffered, every bone seemed dislocated. This was especially the case while they raised Him in the air, and when they dropped the cross suddenly into the hole and then drove in stakes and pounded in stones about it to make it firm. At last He knows all that it means to be crucified—nailed hand and foot to a cross and hoisted in mid-air, and left hanging there slowly to die.

Thus our Redeemer hangs patiently enduring indescribable torture of body and desolation of soul. Ten minutes of such suffering would seem enough to exhaust life; He hung there three hours. Crucifixion was well invented for the execution of the most degraded of criminals, for one can hardly imagine a more painful kind of death.

Jesus cannot stir hand or foot. It is hardly possible for Him to feebly writhe His aching body. He would

wipe from His eyes the tears and the blood and the sweat; He cannot do it. His head is free, but that is only an additional torture, for at every least movement of it, it pulls upon His nailed hands with exquisite pain. Yes; His head is indeed free; but the thorns that circle it never cease their torment—how dear a price was paid for Christian meekness by the crown of thorns. If He raises His head upright, it strikes this awful crown against the cross, and drives the sharp points yet deeper into His scalp and skull.*

And all this was His deliberate choice. In His inmost soul He says: What sweet liberty is this, a full and free choice of deadly sufferings for men's souls, and no choice of relief.

Oh, how deadly the harm of mortal sin, to be atoned for by God's Son at so fearful a cost. Oh, how steadfast that purpose of Jesus to save us. Oh, how lavish is God of His love for sinners, and how supreme a virtue is pity for a fellow-mortal's spiritual misfortune.

Thus was Jesus crucified. As He was lifted up, He could at first but think: Was there ever such a pain as this—how can I live another moment?—and then close His eyes and wait for death. But soon he opens them again and gazes out upon a vast multitude of people. Instantly His soul's ever paramount thought resumes the mastery; the sight of those upturned faces draws from Him the most intensely earnest prayer of a most

*We have already noticed the surmise of some commentators that His arms and chest were tied to the cross with ropes, in order to fasten His body to it with additional firmness. If such were the case it did not afford Jesus any relief, but rather the reverse; a few minutes of the drag of His weight upon the cords would turn them into lines of burning fire across His naked skin.

prayerful life. Jesus never was so loving, never so powerful a pleader as now: He is now literally the intermediary between earth and heaven.

Says Father Thomas of Jesus: "He then began to fulfil the promise He had made us: 'If I be lifted up above the earth, I will draw all things unto Myself. Now this He said, signifying what death He should die' (John xii. 32, 33). For He drew heaven to Himself, to give us the possession of it; God, to reconcile Him to the world; the just, to inflame them with His love; and sinners, to save them by penance."

Such were the thoughts of Jesus. What were the thoughts of His enemies? They had impatiently awaited the sight of that hateful figure lifted naked into mid-air, nailed to the cross and hanging helpless upon it. He sees them devouring Him with their flaming eyes. Then He hears their loud shout of triumph, and this is swelled into an outburst of victorious malice.

Jesus crucified absolutely absorbed their every faculty. And He, too, was absorbed by the sight of them, as He saw them from His high place of shame and agony—they and all our race, whom He instantly offered to His Father for divine pardon and for eternal salvation. They were not half so eager in their looks as He was desirous to have their gaze fixed upon Him, and He was glad that they saw Him in such multitudes.

At last! At last! The dearest wish of My life is granted me—I am crucified. I am about to die, and, ah! so lingeringly. And mine is the most painful and the most disgraceful death known to the human race, and I am glad of that, for it will save my fellow-men from eternal death. Let all the world come to Calvary

and look upon Me, for My great hour of perfect love and perfect victory is at hand.

Thus did the heart of Jesus go out to all men and all nations. To Jerusalem, whose temple and dwellings and people, ever so deeply loved, were right before Him; all Judea and Israel; all the peoples and tribes of the whole earth to its uttermost limits. This universal drawing was well expressed in after times by one who had a foremost place in making it effectual. St. Paul thus writes to his Gentile converts: "But now in Christ Jesus, you, who some time were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13).

Prayer had always been our Redeemer's habit of mind, and it was most especially so on the cross. Here He would pour out His very soul in prayer to His Father, filling and overflowing the channels of homage between earth and heaven with His faith, hope, love, and sorrow. He made His act of faith in the entire justice and perfect wisdom of His Father's dispensation in decreeing His crucifixion: "The right hand of the Lord hath displayed its might, the right hand of the Lord hath raised Me up; I shall not die, but shall live and publish the works of the Lord" (Ps. cxvii. 16, 17). Thus Holy Church interprets His death-act of faith, in the Office of holy week. His act of hope will be offered later on and nearer His death in the words of another Psalm: "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit; Thou hast redeemed Me, O Lord, the God of truth" (Ps. xxx. 6). His act of love will be in the incessant repetition of His own words: "Greater love than this hath no man, than that a man should give his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). But all through His prayer of faith and hope and

love ran His prayer of sorrow. It was the loud voice of His pain of body and anguish of mind. His prayer of love was His prayer of penance, the act of contrition of Jesus crucified for our sins.

Let us unite our prayer with His, as we kneel before His cross:

“Look down upon me, good and gentle Jesus, while before Thy face I humbly kneel, and with burning soul pray and beseech Thee, to fix deep in my heart living sentiments of faith, hope, and charity, true contrition for my sins, and a firm purpose of amendment; whilst with great emotion and anguish of soul, I consider and contemplate Thy five wounds, having before my eyes, O good Jesus, what the prophet David spoke in Thy name: They have dug My hands and feet, they have numbered all My bones.” (Prayer before a crucifix, indulgenced by Clement VIII.)

CHAPTER VII.

The Spectacle of Jesus Crucified.

And they sat down and watched Him. And the people stood beholding. And all His acquaintance, and the many women that had followed Him from Galilee, ministering unto Him, stood afar off, beholding these things. And another scripture saith: They shall look on Him whom they pierced (Matt. xxvii. 36, 55; Mark xv. 40; Luke xxiii. 35, 49; John xix. 37).

We know that Jesus bore all His woes, not only without repining, but even most willingly. But if we could say that any part of His misery was less irksome than another, it was that His shame and His sufferings were seen by so many people. He courted publicity in His downfall; pride is the root of our every sin, His public humiliation must be the most fitting reparation. He pays this price in full; He is made a dreadful spectacle.

When, in olden days, the Israelites who offended God in the wilderness repented of their sin, they were pardoned their guilt and healed of its penalty by looking with repentant eyes on the brazen serpent which God commanded Moses to lift up among them. This was one of our Redeemer's types: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (John iii. 14, 15). "They sat down and watched Him," they "stood beholding."

A great crowd of people were near at hand and far off gazing intently—friends and enemies, men and women, vast numbers of them, and of extremely various feelings concerning Him. The executioners and their abettors and masters “sat down and watched Him.” Their work done, these fearful creatures sat down to enjoy looking at “Him whom they had pierced” (Zach. xii. 10), gloating upon His sufferings, and eagerly awaiting His gradually approaching death. This was the final scene in the Jewish reception of their Messiah, promised for so many ages, yearned after by so many generations of devout Hebrews, coming at last so peacefully with such a blinding of power and love, and now welcomed with the cross. They had begun by suspecting Him, had feared Him, envied Him, and, at last, they condemned Him; they voted Him an impostor and a servant of the devil. Now He is crucified, and His death is assured; He is nailed to the cross and will be left there to die—they will have Pilate give Him the finishing stroke before sundown. This is how the Jews looked upon the end of Jesus of Nazareth. O what a spectacle!

“And the people stood beholding.” Any execution is a spectacle which draws the worst of the population, nearly all of them to feed a brutish curiosity, a very few to console the wretched malefactor and his relations. A great multitude, therefore, came to Calvary. For some time Jesus had been the most conspicuous figure of the nation—and now He is to be crucified. Calvary then became the centre of interest for all the Jewish people. Jesus knew that thousands of curious eyes were fixed on His dying agonies. He was pleased with the presence of so great a throng, and glad that they saw

Him so miserably broken and ruined that they never would forget the sight. And well did He know that in all future ages the spectacle of Jesus crucified would rivet the gaze of all peoples. To this day the whole multitude of the nations stands "beholding Him." Calvary's interest is irresistible, its lessons inexhaustible. It so remains forever.

Jesus did not naturally love publicity. Of His thirty-three years of life He spent thirty in retirement, most of that time alone with His mother. After that He gave three years to the very busy preaching of His religion and the organizing of His Church, appearing everywhere openly among the Jews; and, as the end drew nigh, teaching daily in Jerusalem and in the temple, always addressing multitudes, yet always loving solitude and spending much of the night time in "the prayer of God" (Luke vi. 12). But now He is willingly crucified, and most publicly, on a hilltop overlooking the city, at high noon, on a day when people are gathered from the ends of the earth a million strong; He is naked in the sight of all, His arms stretched out and nailed fast, His voice crying aloud to God, to saints, to sinners. Surely it took a heart full of love to thus end a life mostly given to silent prayer. He did so that He might be as open to us as the leaves of a book, to read in His soul and in His body the blessed wisdom of the divine love for sinners.

"And the many women that had followed Him from Galilee, ministering unto Him; and many other women that came up with Him to Jerusalem, stood afar off beholding." Little did these fervent souls think, when they bound their fortunes to the young prophet of their country home, that they would at last behold Him crucified.

But, woman-like, they were true till the end. Nearly all of them were kept at a distance. The soldiers cleared the immediate vicinity of the cross of all but the mother of Jesus, St. John and a few women besides who were near akin, or especially dear to Jesus, like Mary Magdalen. Anyway, the dense crowd of all the rougher elements of the people would hinder our Savior's Galilean sisterhood from a near approach. But they came as close as they could, and they outstayed the larger part of the on-lookers, whom the earthquake and the darkening sky doubtless dispersed.

The Church admires and forever praises the constancy of these women friends of Jesus and their unshrinking courage. His holiness, His gentleness, His resistless religious appeals, had first attracted them; then His miracles amazed them, and His tenderness for the wayward, His sympathy for the afflicted, and now His misfortunes, won them totally. They followed Him from first to last with unwavering loyalty.

If these women had been allowed into the enclosure of Pilate's court, they would have lifted their shrill voices in protest. "The whole multitude" would not have cried out: "Crucify Him!" Waiting sadly outside of Pilate's court, they had doubtless kept Jesus company to and from Herod's palace, all but stupefied with fear of what was to come.

In the pagan orient women were the slaves of men, and seldom were allowed out of doors. And even in the Israel of God women were closely shut in. Woman's place as man's helpmeet and equal was not rightly known till Jesus came, and, by His doctrine of virginity, and of marriage and divorce, above all by the motherhood of

Mary, had elevated the sex to its proper dignity. And they returned Him a devoted allegiance, broke away from their homes and followed Him even to Calvary.

But what amazement filled their souls as they gazed on Him crucified. What sympathy, what sobs of compassion, what prayers to the heavenly Father, what horror at the cruel conspirators and the executioners. How hard the hammers beat on their sensitive souls as they heard Jesus being nailed. And later on, how terrible and yet how sweet to them were His words from the Cross, uttered loud and weird with His dying voice.

We thank God for the women of Calvary. For what man among us does not owe his salvation to his mother, or to his wife, or to a devout sister or daughter? The power of the whole sex as rulers in the realm of love was enhanced that day by the merit of that multitude of women, whose presence and whose fidelity soothed the last hours of their Redeemer.

The virtue of self-denial is well taught by this spectacle. We know not what place self-love can find on Calvary. Where is selfishness, where is human ambition now? The only real glory the world has ever known is a share of the cross and passion of Jesus Christ, won by patient endurance of injuries, loving atonement to God for sin, both one's own and another's. And now to the end of the world, when any woe is bitter, it will be called a cross, and thus be made holy and precious. And when the best word of encouragement shall be spoken to one in distress it will be this: Bear your cross bravely in union with Jesus crucified.

And self-denial of the bodily kind is taught in this school of unselfish suffering. Men are always saying, at

least by their conduct: What are our bodies for, if not for reasonable enjoyment? St. Paul (Rom. xii. 1) answers them: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service." We learn from this that the most reasonable use of bodily comfort is to make a sacrifice of it. We clearly understand what reasonable bodily enjoyment is if we sit down and watch Jesus on Calvary. Then we learn our lesson of sacrifice, Christ being teacher and pattern both. What did He devote His body to, He, who is divine reason itself? Here is known and approved the reasonableness of a mortified life.

How close our imitation of the bodily sufferings of Jesus might be, the Apostle tells us in the next chapter (verse 14): "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences." Put His maxims of self-denial on your soul like a garment; imprint the memory of His death indelibly on your mind. And make no provision for, that is to say totally ignore, the fleshly enjoyments of life.

All this is the Christian's answer to the self-indulgent complaining against bodily austerity as unreasonable, and saying that "moderate enjoyment," and not a living sacrifice, should be the rule. What was Christ's bodily condition when He was making sure of our eternal enjoyment of soul and body in heaven?

Oh, how many virtues flow into our souls by our looking upon Him whom we have pierced, sitting out our watch upon Calvary—humility, patience, self-denial for the sake of God and man, obedience to the Divine will, even when shown through the perverse will of men,

and especially love. Love is exalted in all its glory upon Calvary.

“We adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee, because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world.” I adore Thee, O Lamb of God, who hast now taken away the sins of the world by the offering of Thy life to Thy offended Father. I adore Thee, O Jesus crucified, and I love Thee. I will be true to Thee forever, both in my innermost soul by faith in Thy doctrine of penance, and in my outward behavior by daily imitation of Thy self-denial on Calvary.

PART VI.

THE SEVEN LAST WORDS.

CHAPTER I.

Jesus Speaks from the Cross.

For this was I born, for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth (John xviii. 37).

But you are come . . . to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament, and to the sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than that of Abel (Heb. xii. 22-24).

Who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard for His reverence (Heb. v. 7).

For the word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God (I. Cor. i. 18).

Jesus had been almost entirely silent before Pilate and the chief priests, and said not a single word to King Herod. And on the cross He speaks not many words, but they are more full of meaning than any He ever uttered: the Divine Word Incarnate will speak His highest wisdom at the end of His earthly career. "The tree on which were fastened the limbs of the sufferer was also the seat of the Master and teacher," says St. Augustine. The divine life on earth was all praying, preaching, and suffering. And so it ended.

And His sermon on Calvary was for all men. He there spoke to His enemies. They "sat and watched

Him" with fierce looks, blaspheming Him with incredible bitterness; and He with all His suffering looked upon them and heard what they said with the utmost kindness of heart; He forgave them, prayed for them publicly, openly excused their crime, and offered His death for them, a death they themselves had brought upon Him. He spoke to the penitent thief. It was a word of pardon and a promise of paradise; he is known forever as the good thief from that word. Jesus also spoke to His mother and to the disciple whom He loved, exchanging place with him as Mary's son. Having thus preached to friends and foes alike, He then addressed His Father. He uttered a final word of tender protest, the complaint of mercy against justice, a heart-moving proof that the unbearable desolation of spirit with which He began His passion in the Garden had returned upon Him as He ended it, or rather that it had never left Him. As if an echo of this cry of abandonment, He proclaimed aloud His burning thirst for souls, feebly shown by that of His body in the throes of death. And then He announced the completion of His task, and claimed His Father's loving welcome for His fleeting spirit. Jesus finally opened wide the prison doors of His body, and with a loud cry of atoning sorrow for our sins, He bowed His head and died. Thus, as the cross was the summary of all His penitential pains, so its words are an abridgment of all His offerings of prayer, all His lessons of pardon, hope, and love.

"The words of the Lord are searched with fire" (Ps. xvii. 3), says the Psalmist. The fire of love is suffering, and it was heated seven-fold on the cross as it searched our Lord's words. Never has any discourse

kindled love in men's hearts as the seven words of Jesus crucified. Never did ignorance find so plain a teacher, or stupidity so patient a one; never did human wisdom meet so supreme a master, or malice yield so complete a victory to the arms of patient love.

Think, too, that as Jesus spoke these words He feared that each one of them might be His last. With what carefulness He chose them, and how truly do they reveal His heart. Well may St. Paul exclaim: "Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. viii. 35), bound to His cross as we are by these seven golden links.

The most precious part of every man's life is his dying moments. Our Redeemer dedicated His last hours on earth exclusively to atoning sufferings and merciful words. He forgot justice, except as He felt conscious that He was its victim. Mercy alone inspired His words on the cross. If He realized more vividly than ever the malignity of sin—and His torments made this inevitable—He yet turned the lesson all into sympathy for the guilty.

But, though His words are the most precious ever spoken, the crucified is Himself the strongest appeal to sinners. What man can yield to sensuality and honestly call Jesus crucified his Master?—or to worldly vanity, to craving for riches, to pursuit of enemies? Look at Him, fastened in that frightful position by His own free choice, more firmly than by the nails. See Him hoisted high above the many thousands of His countrymen naked upon a gibbet, slashed with whips, crowned with thorns, placarded an impostor, convicted a blasphemer, wracked in every nerve with indescribable pain, wracked in His

tenderest emotions by visions of the damnation of those He loved better than His own life. Look at Jesus crucified; and, if you own yourself a follower of Him, you cannot withstand the eloquence of the crucifixion pleading for faith in God's love and sorrow for sin.

A very practical lesson is this. As His words spoken from the cross are Jesus' most persuasive discourse, so our words spoken in the spirit of Christian self-sacrifice will win more souls than any others. So says the greatest persuader of men among our Redeemer's followers: "For both the Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block and unto the Gentiles foolishness. But unto them that are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I. Cor. i. 22-24).

CHAPTER II.

Jesus is Taunted by His Enemies.

And they that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying: Bah! Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save Thy own self. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. In like manner the chief priests, the rulers, with the scribes and ancients, mocking, said one to another: He saved others, Himself He cannot save. Let Christ, the chosen of God, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe. He trusted in God, let Him now deliver Him if He will have Him, for He said: I am the Son of God. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him and offering Him vinegar, and saying: If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself. And the selfsame thing the thieves also, that were crucified with Him, reproached Him with. And one of those robbers who were hanged, blasphemed Him, saying: If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us (Matt. xxvii. 39-44; Mark xv. 29-32; Luke xxiii. 35-39).

As Jesus looked down upon those who were to listen to His dying message, He saw the place swarming with blasphemers; and the air was hideous with their jibes and curses. It was a vast concourse of people. There was the multitude gathered by the chief priests early in the day, and who had demanded His death and had fought hard for it; not one of them but would go to Calvary to see their victory complete. But they were not all. This great crowd was swelled by many thousands of others, for the trial of Jesus was the absorbing event of that day, and all, even strangers, would await

His fate, and most of them be curious to witness it. All these took some part in the revilings of Jesus on Calvary.

The chief priests and the many leading Jews who were with them blasphemed Him; the outlaws on either side of Him blasphemed Him, though one of them afterwards repented; the soldiers also mocked Him and blasphemed Him; and "they that passed by blasphemed Him"; the whole multitude seems to have filed along under the cross before returning to the city, both out of curiosity to get a close view of the arch-traitor, and to make sure of His hearing their curses in His death hour. That dismal procession the chief priests would arrange and manage, as the guard was subject to them. With them were the doctors of the law and the members of the council and many Pharisees. These never quitted Jesus till they saw Him expire.

As to what our Savior's feelings were, we can judge from the blasphemies He was forced to hear. But those that are recorded are, we may be certain, only part of what were actually uttered; for the Pharisees would be sure to repeat their old accusations: Thou wast possessed of a devil, they would shout; Thy miracles were worked by Beelzebub; Thou art that most vile impostor, who, pretending to be a Jew, and the King of the Jews, wast really a wretched Samaritan, one of a race of accursed heretics whom Thou didst ever prefer before the people of God. Deny it if Thou canst.

"He trusted in God, let Him now deliver Him." The only real comfort of a dying man is in His trust in God. The enemies of Jesus did their utmost to deprive Him of this last support in His death agony. Well had He called them children of the devil, for the fiend's dearest

wish and hardest effort is to rob a dying sinner of confidence in God—during life his favorite temptation is over-confidence in God and, at the point of death, despair. Consider the malice of triumphing in your dying enemy's despair. Immune as Jesus was from anything like despair, they did not think that He was, and Jesus by these most dreadful taunts could all the more fully realize what it means to despair of God's mercy, and this would aid Him in atoning for that sin and saving men from it. Thus was Jesus taunted; and especially reproached that He was under the malediction of heaven. "He trusted in God," they said—meaning that He did so hypocritically—"let Him now deliver Him." "If Thou be the Son of God come down from the cross." If He is not an imposter and His miracles a deception (such was their meaning), then let Him prove it by coming down from the cross. Did He really save others? Then He can save Himself. So said all His enemies. It was from "the chief priests with the scribes and ancients," that they got their words—"they that passed by," "the soldiers also," "the selfsame thing the thieves also." "Let Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." We will believe Him, they said with bitter irony, and accept His claim of Kingship, if He saves Himself from crucifixion.

We can hardly help asking, why did He not take them at their word? How complete a victory it would have been, we are tempted to think, if He had suddenly left the cross, transfigured with triumphant power, rebuked them on the spot, and taken possession of the city, then and there establishing His religion on the ruins of His conquered enemies.

How different was the divine plan. It was exactly because He would not save Himself, but that He willed to give up His life for all, friend and enemy, that "God hath given Him a name which is above every name" (Phil. ii. 9). No; He does not seek the triumph of power, but of patience. And is not the power of love in His death and in His resurrection the power of God? "It was a mightier deed," says St. Gregory the Great, "to destroy death by dying and rising again, than to save life by descending from the cross." His mother Mary did not beseech Him to come down—she who could say: If Thou be my Son grant me this one boon—save Thyself. The crucifixion pierced her very soul; but she knew the higher wisdom, that he that shall lose his life for the salvation of his brethren shall save it (Matt. x. 39). Nor did the Heavenly Father agree. He would say to Jesus: If Thou askest it, I will not refuse. But wilt Thou rescind our compact? If so, then it never can be written that I so loved the world as to give My only-begotten Son for its salvation. Thou must rescind Thy other compact, too—that with men; for it has been promised that a whole burnt offering shall be made of Thee among all the nations from the rising of the sun till its setting (Mal. i. 11). Nor will it be true: "This is My body which shall be given for you"; nor: "This is My blood which shall be shed for you"; no, nor this wonderful word: "As often as you shall eat this bread and drink this chalice, you shall show forth the death of the Lord until He come" (I. Cor. xi. 24-26). And if Thou dost now shrink from the doom of death, then shalt Thou be hindered of the glory of Thy resurrection.

And so we, on our part, as we recall with terror that

fierce cry: "Come down from the cross!" even we say to Him: "O Jesus, we thank Thee that Thou didst not come down, but didst remain and die upon the cross."

To apply this lesson to practical life, let us realize that the supreme power of a Christian is no other than that of Christ; namely, unfeigned meekness under injurious treatment; this is the Christian's foremost miracle. But how hard for flesh and blood; how hard even to admire. Yet the example of Christ, no less than His invariable teaching, enforces this doctrine. God is pleased better by sincere affection for those who ill use us, affection shown by our prayers for them and by our yielding to them everything consistent with God's honor, than He is by our claiming our rights and enforcing them. It was by no other means that our Redeemer overcame the world. Who would wish that it had been otherwise?—that, for example, he really had called down fire from heaven to consume His enemies? What Christian envies the Mahometans their apostolate of the sword? What Christian would be glad to read in history that Peter, James, and John led the armies that destroyed Jerusalem instead of Vespasian and Titus? Who is not glad that the mightiest of rulers rules from the cross and is the King of Martyrs?

CHAPTER III.

The First Word: "Father, Forgive them."

And Jesus said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke xxiii. 34).

The silence of Jesus before His accusers, in both the Jewish and Roman courts was, as we have often noticed, seldom broken. By word of mouth He answered scarcely at all to their tongue lashings or whip lashings, but "Like a lamb He was led to the slaughter, opening not His mouth" (Isaias liii. 7). It was otherwise on Calvary. When He heard their deafening yell of triumph as He was lifted above the crowd, nailed upon His cross, their greeting of triumphant hate appalled Him, and He answered it instantly. His answer was a prayer to His Father for their forgiveness; though, indeed, "Father, forgive them!" had been His mental ejaculation at every indignity they offered Him, every spatter of verbal venom which accompanied the spittle of their mouths and the blows of their fists from the beginning of His passion.

This prayer of Jesus is most instructive to us. For we ask: What dying man but would sink away in deeper than deathly silence at the sight of his murderers, their grim delight, their fiendish triumph, hissing their curses upon him in his last moments? Not so Jesus. Much as He lamented their sin, they were the ones whom He would choose to have nearest to Him when He died,

even these His deadliest foes. He died devotedly loving them; loving them, indeed, in preference to any other sinners in the world.

Thus Jesus, having mounted His pulpit, begins His last discourse with a prayer for the pardon of His slayers. But we are startled by the boldness of His plea in their behalf—it is their ignorance. One would think this to be their weakest excuse, for admitting that they knew not what they did, yet their ignorance was wilful, and it was perverse. They could know all about Jesus if they were not determined beforehand not to know.

He was everywhere foretold most plainly in the scriptures “read every Sabbath day in the synagogues” (Acts xiii. 27). They had seen Him and heard Him personally many times, especially during the last few months, when He taught almost daily in the temple itself. For two years and more they had had their messengers in close observation of Him wherever He went, watching Him and studying Him and reporting about Him. And His whole doctrine was the love of God and man, proved by marvelous miracles, all of them of priceless worth to the afflicted. Yet the leading members of the priesthood and the principal men among the Pharisees were so blinded by pride of race and of caste that they would see nothing good in Him; His offense was that He taught a highly spiritual religion and opened the door of God’s paradise to all the nations of the earth.

A good test of their guilt is this: What Jew of our day, however set in his delusion, will maintain that Jesus of Nazareth was rightly put to death? Such a thing is unheard of.

Everything that a true Israelite yearned after, Jesus

completely fulfilled; yea, and infinitely more. But the Jews were called upon to give up a religion of outward figures and types for one of the interior substance of faith and hope and love; and they must accept the universal brotherhood of all of God's children in place of their exclusive national church. Many thousands of their best men heartily accepted this teaching, because they knew it was right. Why did not the conspirators know it likewise? Their ignorance was their worst offence, we would think, being the very name and color of their crime, nay its actual substance. All that proved Jesus to be their Messiah and the Son of God they knew better than a child knows his primer.

Yet Jesus insists that they know nothing. He is the searcher of hearts, and He is their apologist, as much as He is their victim. He must be right. Granting, He would say, that their ignorance is vicious to the last degree, it is ignorance all the same. They do not blaspheme nor kill one whom they believe to be their Messiah, though they do perversely refuse to consider His claims. The Jewish rulers really did not know the full wickedness of what they did against Jesus. What though they read of Him in their Scriptures? They read everything about the Messiah with preconceived ideas. It was written in the book they loved and read, and yet hidden from their eyes; for "if they had known it," says St. Paul, "they would never have crucified the Lord of Glory" (I. Cor. ii. 8).

And there were other really mitigating circumstances besides. Perhaps the most irascible temperament in all history was that of the Israelites. And they habitually mistook their angry passions and resentments for re-

ligious zeal, "zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. x. 2), says one who was a perfect type of a Jewish zealot, and who, with all his humility, yet excuses his own murder of Christians before His conversion on Jesus' plea for His murderers (I. Tim. i. 13). Their crime was greatly due to mental habit and racial temperament. Listen to the same Apostle excusing the Jews of a later period for misunderstanding the law: "But even until this day when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart" (II. Cor. iii. 15). Let us agree with our Redeemer—it was hard to read the glory of the Son of God in the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. It was "the wisdom of God in a mystery" (I. Cor. ii. 7), hidden from all but the most pure of heart. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34). Yes; and out of the fullness of the heart the eye readeth, rightly or wrongly.

Truly these wretched men were not as guilty in Christ's judgment as they are in ours. To Him they were wayward children, blinded and misled; culpable, indeed, but excusable. And, we too, if we are like Christ, can always find some real excuse for those who harm us, as we have an indispensable obligation to pray for them, whether excusable or not.

But, after all, Jesus on the cross would plead for the Jews whether they could be excused or not. Jesus crucified is incapable of administering justice. He is now most truly Himself—a Redeemer, an advocate, a victim of sinners. Justice He did threaten in the proper time and place, but Calvary is not the place and His death agony is not the time for anything but mercy, and mercy that shall be absolutely unstinted. Ignorance, malicious

and blind, is met by mercy, equally blind and wholly unlimited.

Thus His poor broken heart kindles with compassion for His very murderers. While they are putting Him to death under every circumstance of injustice and hate and cruelty, He prays for their forgiveness. They are His murderers, and He is their advocate for pardon, instant, ardent, persistent advocate, full of unheard of excuses.

And all this is uniform with His teaching from the beginning. He who said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v. 7)—oh, how readily He forgives these His most unmerciful enemies. Had He not commanded us: "Love your enemies, pray for them that persecute you" (Matt. v. 43)? Who was so unjustly persecuted as He was? Whose enemies were so unlovely? So He loved them, and He prayed for them with His dying breath. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34). What His heart was full of in this His hour of gloom and torment, is shown by these words of pitiful prayer for His enemies.

They had accused Him of being "a friend of publicans and sinners" (Luke vii. 35); He now proves that He was no less a friend of Pharisees and Sadducees. Oh, how He pitied them! On the instant that He heard their insults, He seemed to forget His pains, to forget everything in an overmastering sentiment of compassion: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He could have prayed thus in silence, making His plea in His silent thoughts, and His Father who seeth in secret would have granted His petition. But He was too deeply stirred with pity to pray silently, and His voice

rang out clear and loud, trembling with anxiety to hinder the wrath of God, resistlessly moved by emotions of love and of grief. His inmost soul was so full of entreaty that He could not be silent. His whole being, divine and human, is in that prayer; His form lifted upwards towards heaven, His hands stretched out and nailed fast in a perfect attitude of petition, His voice cleaving the skies, His eyes flowing tears, His many wounds dripping blood—all that is meant by Jesus, the world's Redeemer, is concentrated in that prayer for His murderers, for the worst men who ever lived: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

How supreme a virtue is compassion for sinners. How adorable is Christ amid all the shame and torture of the cross praying for His triumphant enemies.

Apart from the consciousness of doing His Father's will, three things, and these alone, relieved Jesus of the strain of His torture, whether of body or of soul—praying for His enemies, suffering for them, and setting us an example; prayer could not be more fervent, suffering more exquisitely perfect, example more attractive.

Since that day no prayers are so fervently said or so quickly heard as those that men offer for their enemies, and even for the enemies of religion and of God. Let us remember, too, that His prayer was not for the Jews alone, but also for the Gentile soldiers who did their bidding and joined in their insults; so that then and there He "might reconcile both [Gentiles and Jews] to God in one body by the cross" (Eph. ii. 16).

How consoling is all this to us sinners. As our Redeemer in heaven remembers the pains we caused Him by our sins, instead of being for that reason angry with us,

His heart is moved with irresistible tenderness to palliate our guilt before His Father. He is now our "advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just" (I. John ii. 1), praying for us as once He died for us.

It was thus that God's great preacher and ours began his sermon on Calvary. The First Word of the Cross is: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Formerly: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him" (Matt. xvii. 5), was the Father's word from the sky when Christ was transfigured with divine glory on Mount Tabor. Much rather does the Father approve Him and His teaching now on Mount Calvary, at the very gate of death, desolate, abandoned, suffering every indignity. His cross is a better pulpit than the luminous cloud of Tabor, and Moses and Elias yield their places to the two malefactors, who, with the frantic Jews and the heartless soldiers, are the Redeemer's chosen companions in His last agony. As soon as I suffer an injury I have a choice of several mental attitudes, I can either fix my thoughts with aversion on those who make me suffer; or I can think exclusively of myself and hug my misery with self-condolence; or I can set aside both these (which are usually joined in one) and strive manfully to imitate Jesus crucified in forgiving my enemies and praying for them. Which of these states of mind best becomes me as a Christian?

And let us not be puffed up in comparing ourselves even with Caiaphas and his associates. Doubtless we can truly say that, however bad we are, we are not so bad as the Jews who killed Christ. But we are none of us good enough to be saved without Christ making some kind of excuses for us in His Father's court.

CHAPTER IV.

The Second Word: "This Day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

And the selfsame thing the thieves also, that were crucified with Him, reproached Him with. And one of those who were hanged, blasphemed Him, saying: If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying: Neither dost thou fear God, seeing that thou art under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done no evil. And he said to Jesus: Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom. And Jesus said to him: Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise (Matt. xxvii. 44; Mark xv. 32; Luke xxiii. 39-43).

It would seem that the good thief at first joined with the bad one in insulting Jesus, and afterwards, moved perhaps by our Redeemer's patience, or even by some unrecorded words of affectionate protest from Him, repented of the wrong he had done Him, and reproved the other thief for his blasphemous insults. Then he felt deeply moved with sorrow for his sins, for Jesus touched his heart by a secret influence, bestowing on him the grace of repentance for all the wickedness of his bad life. He openly confessed that he was justly executed and in due reward of his misdeeds. Following this he paid our Redeemer sincere allegiance as his King: "Lord," he cried, "remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom."

It was a timid prayer, but it was enough. Jesus was

not content to say: I will not forget thee, thou poor comrade of my shame and woe. But He instantly addressed him with His most solemn form of speech: "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." This is the second part or division of our crucified preacher's sermon.

How glad the Jews were that Jesus was crucified between the two thieves. And Jesus was glad, too; the worse the sinner, the better the companion; so thought Jesus. "The good thief" is this man's name in all Christendom ever since. It is a bold paradox, "the good thief," but a reflex of our Redeemer's mind, who would lavish upon malefactors the terms of endearment usually given to the virtuous.

These two thieves were our Savior's thieves, and He saved one of them, to our inexpressible consolation. The softening of that heart is a miracle of more worth to us than the rending of the rocks when our Lord expired.

The mother of the sons of Zebedee had once begged for them the two places of honor in Jesus' Kingdom (Mark x. 37). That privilege the Father had reserved for these two thieves. Had Salome and her sons known that an enthronement in His Kingdom meant crucifixion, she would not have asked the favor so eagerly, and they would have better understood His answer: "Can you drink of the chalice that I shall drink of?" How singular it all is; these two favorite Apostles were refused the high places, and the Father granted them to two thieves. The good thief is not made an apostle. But, as an ancient writer says, he is our Redeemer's colleague in the crucifixion; we may add that he is His advocate, and defender against the other thief, he is also His public wor-

shipper, even on Calvary, and His chosen escort at His first entrance into Paradise—meanwhile, only a crucified robber. Surely the grace of repentance is a royal grace.

O Jesus, Thy blessed Providence saved the good thief by causing him to be crucified. Teach me that in my own case Thou hast no other plan for changing a sinner into a penitent, nor even changing a timid friend into Thy fervent disciple, except crucifying the flesh with its vices and concupiscences (Gal. v. 24).

But not only repentance but faith also is here raised on high for our behoof. For against all appearances did this man believe that Christ had a kingdom; as if to say: Here art Thou treated by both Jew and Gentile as the vilest of men; yet do I openly proclaim Thee the Master of the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus St. Gregory says that the good thief “was on the cross and nothing of him remained free from punishment but his heart and his tongue. With his heart he believed unto justification and with his tongue he confessed unto salvation” (Rom. x. 10). It cost the thief a painful effort to speak; yet he defended Jesus vigorously and confessed Him openly. And St. Augustine says that others believed in Christ because they saw Him raise the dead to life; the thief believed though he saw Him hanging with himself on the cross.

Sweeter solace to Jesus than the visit of an angel were the faith and contrition of this thief. Sinners, not angels, were the quest of Jesus. How He must have been consoled by the change in the thief from the ‘tter mind in the first moments of the crucifixion to the gentle affection of this brave act of loyalty.

Consider how different crucifixion was to our Redeemer’s convert after receiving His quick response:

“Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise”; meaning, I will lead thee from Golgotha and crucifixion to the peaceful rest of the holy patriarchs. This day is sad enough for thee and Me, but before set of sun we two shall begin together the life of eternal bliss. I bid thee bravely endure thy pains, they are God’s final test of thy worthiness to be saved.

How many thoughts claimed our Redeemer’s mind that hour. Nations to be saved, many generations of men yet unborn—Jew and Gentile, bond and free. Yet He gave His whole mind instantly to this robber, and excluded all else till he made sure that he was saved; as if He had no other reason for coming to Calvary, but to give a happy death to an obscure outlaw.

Surely no act is so conspicuous in our religion as an act of holy contrition; it is lifted up with Jesus above the earth, enthroned with Him on Calvary, led away as His best trophy in His immortal triumph.

“And we indeed justly” suffer, confessed the robber. No words could give better evidence of true repentance, as Jesus in a few days will show by making of sorrow for sin and its confession a Christian sacrament. How sweet a balm was this humble confession to our Redeemer’s stricken soul, whose whole life was devoted to inspiring just such sentiments.

And as the thief confesses his own guilt he shows the reason why, for it was thereby that he would proclaim Christ’s innocence and holiness, for he adds immediately: “But this Man has done no wrong.” What a contrast with the chief priests. How dull their perceptions. This poor wretch, scourged and nailed and dying, sees and hears enough to recognize the Son of God in another crucified malefactor, and quickly changes curses to acts of

faith and adoration. And if you say that he was moved to it by Christ's prayer for His enemies, I answer that the other thief despised the same patient demeanor of Jesus as a cowardly weakness. No wonder our Lord's response was swift. And remember, too, how slow He had been to give up Judas; how quick He is to take up the thief.

Perhaps, as already suggested, it was our Redeemer's patience under injuries and His wonderful charity to His enemies that (apart from the secret stirrings of grace) converted the good thief. His conversion should, on that account, please us all the better, rather indeed, than if Christ had miraculously come down from the cross and taken down both thieves with Him. Jesus certainly chose rather to save the thief from hell than to save Himself from death, as his enemies bantered Him to do. To change one enemy into a friend is to Christ a more notable exploit than to rout and slay a million enemies of God. And He strictly enjoins the same preference upon us.

As a place of rating of saints and sinners, of innocence and repentance, Calvary gives a high premium to innocence, the most perfect in the immaculate Mother and the beloved Apostle; and to penance for iniquity of the darkest dye in Magdalen and the good thief. The graces of Mary, John, and Magdalen are each a token to us of a certain kind of divine favor; and so is the good thief our Redeemer's pledge to us of a precious grace. Let a man but come in a humble spirit to Calvary, nay, let him even be dragged there all against his will, and, however blasphemous a sinner he may have been, *even on Calvary itself* Jesus will save him; and however great a boon he may ask, Jesus will grant it to him on the spot.

To Jesus His fellow-crucified were not the only rob-

bers there. The Jewish conspirators were robbers. They had robbed the people of God of their Savior, they had robbed the King of Israel of His kingdom. And when they blasphemed Him He entreated His Father to forgive them. This other robber is now embraced by a mercy whose effects are more evident—this poor ruffian, born and bred, most likely, amid every degrading influence, and at last justly put to death, is drawn graciously to penance, and is granted pardon most generously.

Let us duly remember that at holy Mass we are daily promised the same heavenly gift from the Calvary of the Eucharistic Christ for all sinners present there. How very much of sweetness does this Second Word of our Preacher's dying discourse add to the all-sublime wisdom of our religion. O Jesus, we love Thee and we thank Thee for Thy mercy to the poor thief.

Jesus answered the prayer of the good thief instantly; He did not answer the blasphemies of the impenitent one at all. That duty he left to the good thief. It greatly pleased our Lord that the good thief thus reproved his companion and exhorted him to repent; and it is noteworthy that the penitent malefactor strived to save his friend, even before making sure of his own salvation—with what effect we cannot be sure, though the more probable opinion is not hopeful. The unhappy man was lost because he would not be saved. The loss of our Redeemer's fellow-sufferer was no small addition to His own anguish of heart. Is there no lesson for us in this?—that the gracious promise, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise," was foolishness to one of the thieves, while it was eternal happiness to the other?

CHAPTER V.

The Third Word: "Woman, Behold thy Son!" Mary before the Crucifixion.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen. When Jesus, therefore, had seen His mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own (John xix. 25-27).

Before considering Mary's part in the events of Calvary, let us revert to what happened to her previously. There is no revealed account of our Redeemer's parting with His mother before He began His passion. Doubtless it was a most affectionate interview, and very sorrowful. It took place, perhaps, as He left the supper-room for the Garden of Olives; or, as many surmise, at Bethany, previous to His last visit to the city. Their tryst was Calvary. She was, of course, absolutely conformed to the divine will for every pang of soul and torture of body that Jesus should endure. "He was offered because He willed it" (Isaias liii. 7), told His mind; and His mind was hers—she willed His sacrifice most lovingly. For, she would say, He is mine to offer because I am His mother, and willingly do I offer Him. Thus Mary loved our redemption as became the mother of the Redeemer. And, therefore, during all that was about to happen, right on to the very end, Mary, we may be quite certain, showed none of the weaknesses common to wom-

en in great affliction, no fainting fits nor hysterics; hers was too strong a nature, hers too great an affliction for such things; or we should rather say, that her motherhood was too high an office to allow her to be subject to ordinary natural defects.

But how greatly must she not have suffered. There can be little doubt that those prophecies of His passion and death, which Jesus made to His disciples, He made much earlier to her alone and in far greater detail, living so long, so intimately, and so lovingly in her society. We must also remember that Simeon's prophecy, "Thine own soul a sword shall pierce" (Luke ii. 35), could not at any time have been far from her thoughts. It was, therefore, by arrangement with her son, at the parting interview, that she at last took her station beneath the cross, making that picture of mother and Son on Calvary which is hardly rivalled in our affection even by that of the Madonna and Child at Bethlehem.

He had undoubtedly bidden her come to Him in His death agony, there to open her heart to receive her full share of all His woes, to receive also His parting message, see Him die, and bury His corpse with her own hands. Thus it was that in their farewell interview mother and Son mingled their tears together, exchanged words of mutual encouragement, and appointed their next meeting place; absolute confidence on the part of Jesus, together with deep sympathy for His mother's bereavement; on her part rapt adoration of the divine mercy in the atonement of her Son, and an intense longing for the final test of all her love for Him beneath His cross.

The beginning of our Savior's career on earth had been the utterance of Mary's response to the angel: "Be

it done unto me according to thy word" (Luke i. 38), for it was then that the Word was made flesh. No other words could so well express her mind at the end of her Son's life; may God's will be done. Thus she accepted beforehand her place upon Calvary, and was clothed with the awful dignity of Mother of Sorrows, her soul in entire conformity with the divine will, and in absolute unity with her Son's love for sinners.

For these reasons her relation to Christ crucified is most sacred to us, its study most beneficial. If the Apostle could say: I "now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting in the sufferings of Christ" (Coll. i. 24), how much rather would Mary, the queen of the Apostles, say to us: I feel deeply honored by my share in the work of your redemption.

Who, after Jesus Himself, knew as well as she did what it meant to redeem the whole race of Adam, she the second Eve, living always in the company of the second Adam? During the entire life of Jesus, His mother, in her intimate communion with Him, heart to heart, must have continually heard from Him the full wickedness of sin, and he must have perfectly revealed to her the bitterness of soul, the torture of body, which He was to suffer for its atonement. Yet when the fateful day at last arrived, although she was perfectly prepared for all the trials of the passion, her mother's heart was wrung with unspeakable grief, of sympathy for her Son's fate.

After parting from Jesus, Mary resumed her usual place with the company of holy women. They had provided some obscure and safe shelter in the city, not far,

we must suppose, from the scenes of her Son's passion. And He, during it all, how often must He not have thought of her, the one only mortal who knew Him perfectly, who loved Him as He deserved. He could scarcely have been quite unmindful of her for a single moment. It was a solace to His pains and yet an added bitterness, to know that she was with Him in spirit through it all, her soul quite melted with sympathy. How fervently she must have prayed, though hers was the prayer of a mind darkened, we judge, with the same desolation as His own, because she must have partaken fully of His interior trials. The outward penalties paid for our ransom she was exempted from; the interior atonement she could and did claim a full share of. What she could suffer she would suffer. Anguish of heart was as near as possible identical in mother and Son—Mother of Sorrows is her dearest title, as Man of Sorrows is His.

How weary to her were the watches of that Thursday night. There was no lack of news of what was happening every hour of that dreadful time, and during the forenoon of Friday. How awful her interest in the different events, as accounts of each were brought to her by faithful messengers—the treason of Judas and the part he played at the arrest, the trials before the chief priests, the brief words of her Son's defence, the denials of Peter and then his conversion, the condemnation, the spittings and blows and mockings—it seemed to her that it all was done to herself no less than to her Son.

On Good Friday, at dawn of day, she must have left her humble asylum; it would have been impossible, it seems to us, for the mother of Jesus to remain indoors that morning. With a group of her Galilean sisters and

neighbors, guided doubtless by St. John, she mingled cautiously with the stream of people going to Pilate's palace. Then her heart grew doubly heavy; who could tell what moment He would be put to death!

Many a word she heard on the streets that cut deep into her mother's heart, and soon after she heard the very shouts of the mob that filled Pilate's outer court. How slow the minutes of those fatal hours dragged on, yet all too swift for her, who would have stretched the seconds into years to postpone His dreaded doom. There was an interval of quiet while the frenzied mob went with Jesus when He was sent to King Herod—the stillness about the Roman court only drives her thoughts deeper into the dark repository of her secret. And then she may have got a glimpse of His figure clad in a fool's white robe on His return from Herod.

Her friends are back and forth, and tell her all they hear—the charges of sedition, sacrilege, blasphemy, imposture; they say that they hope something from Pilate's hard fight for Jesus; but this only deepens her despondency. They relate the awful alternative, Barabbas or Jesus, which the Roman judge offers the Jews. And, as they are telling her, she hears the roar of the Jewish voices choosing Barabbas rather than her Son. Then comes news of the scourging, the crowning, the *Ecce Homo*. At last the shouts are thickened; it is a veritable shriek that proclaims: "No King but Cæsar!" and "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"—my Jesus is condemned and sentenced at last.

Come, come! Oh, let us try to meet Him and console Him on the Way of the Cross. And so, by hurriedly making a circuit through adjacent streets, it may be sup-

posed that she and her little band were enabled to join the larger company of the women of Jerusalem. For, as many think, Mary was with them, and thus saw Jesus on the way to Calvary. To see these women weep for her Son was a comfort to her, though their sorrow compared to hers was like a rippling brook to the ocean. Their words of sympathy were also exceedingly sweet to her, though the unspoken answer of her heart would be: "Labor not to comfort me for the devastation of my people" (Isaias xxii. 4) and for the immolation of my Son.

Soon she saw Him. First came a noisy rush of people running along, stopping, and looking back. Then the leading files of soldiers, using their spears to clear a passage, roughly enough; other soldiers followed to keep the way open; everybody wanted to see the greatest malefactor in the whole world going out to be killed. And then she saw the two "other malefactors" coming along, one after the other, brazen, cursing, defiant, exchanging insults with the baser sort of men in the crowd. Presently she caught sight of her Son, following on in the dreadful place of honor—the dear and beloved Son of her heart of hearts—with His crown of thorns, his face stained with blood and spittle and miserably swollen and disfigured. Everybody had known and heard Jesus, and anyway His placard would reveal Him, but His mother would be the first to recognize Him: "My beloved is chosen among thousands" (Cant. v. 10). There He is, bending wearily under that immense load, Simon behind Him and helping Him to carry it. Jesus looks towards her, and their eyes meet. As He sees her He stops. His glance is full of love, and, though He is plainly very weak, and grief showing forth in every feature, He is

yet patient and courageous. Between Him and her no words are recorded here, but many messages passed from heart to heart by their looks. She must have thought: O if they would let me go to Him! She would have snatched that hideous crown from his head, cleansed and kissed His wounds, knelt down and adored Him, taken Him away and nursed Him. Yet, no; these motherly instincts are quickly superseded by her union of purpose with His own. He must die for the world's redemption.

But He was allowed no long delay, and soon He has given the women of Jerusalem His affectionate warnings; the officer loudly calls the command to go forward, Jesus resumes His cross, and presently she can see Him no longer. The women are now rudely shouldered aside by the crowd, and Mary's next place of meeting with her Son is on Calvary,

CHAPTER VI.

The Third Word (continued). Mary on Calvary.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother (John xix. 25).

What man so unfortunate as to die among enemies and upon a gibbet, would desire to have his own mother present at his death? Yet Jesus did so. "Her eyes bleed tears, His wounds weep blood," says Richard Crashaw. And Jesus would have her tears and His blood mingled together for our sakes. His the cross, hers the sword; one endures a bodily crucifixion, the other a mental. Jesus willed that of all who glory in the cross, not one should claim such glory as the mother of the crucified.

We cannot be certain that Mary was present during the stripping and nailing of Jesus, though we may be sure that she urged her gentle escort, John, to make his way towards Calvary with all speed. But, at any rate, everything that was done she knew full well; she was surely near enough to hear the loud, coarse words of the executioners, the sharp blows of their hammers; and then the cross rose up to her weeping eyes, with her Son hanging upon it. By that time her little party had come closer to Jesus, and she took the place allotted her by Almighty God, awarded her by her divine Son.

She then witnessed the insults of the enemies of Jesus as they triumphed over Him—she was close enough to see their scowling faces. She had seen Jesus adored by the seraphs of heaven, and by the sages of distant peo-

ples, and now sees Him blasphemed by the priests of God's temple, leaders of the basest rabble.

We know not whether it increased or lessened His pain to see His mother there; perhaps one and the other by turns. It was a comfort to know that the only entirely sinless being of His race was with Him to share His fate. And yet it was a grief to know that every pain of His was a pain of hers, and a pain like His in its intensity. This most affectionate of sons is most thoughtful of His mother's happiness; and He knows her heart is broken. Was ever a mother, He asks Himself, so afflicted as My mother? Yet let her stand and suffer with Me for men's salvation.

What a lesson is this to us. What a miracle of mutual love is this, expressed in the extremest suffering ever known? And all their love for each other is only the highest kind of love for us, even for the most undeserving of us. Fully to appreciate the relation of Jesus and Mary on Calvary, is to give to the most innocent joys of life a plaintive cast, which in turn elevates and sanctifies them.

Thus Mary's presence soothed Jesus, even though her sufferings added to His own. He well knew her intensely sympathetic nature, as became the mother of the world's Redeemer; and He would enlist her in His work of saving us, by taxing her sympathies to the utmost. This is why He must have her present at His death. He could bid His Apostles seek safety in flight. He could not dismiss His mother; it is her sacred right to share all her Son's fortunes, good and ill, but especially His crucifixion, because she is (if such a thing were possible) a worthy associate of His atonement. She is the rightful

Queen of Martyrs and entitled to her place beside their King, the highest and holiest place among all the redeemed.

Mary's sense of being a redeemed soul was perfect. She felt herself saved by her Son's redeeming love, though in her case, and hers alone, that atonement took the form of a grace anticipating and preventing every stain of even Adam's sin; for if she was conceived immaculate it was because she was conceived a redeemed soul. She knew that every grace she had, she owed to the foreseen merits of Jesus in this very act of dying on the cross. Her right to be here is a royal one, as she is the King's mother; but her presence is also an act of duty; and also one of gratitude for the highest favors ever received by a creature. And how great is our boast! Here is the foremost of God's redeemed, and one of our own human race, purely and exclusively human in her nature, whose highest prerogative, whose most cherished privilege, is to be immolated with our Savior for His own precise purpose of saving us from sin and hell.

Tearful she must indeed have been. But firm she stood, equal to her task, erect and steady in her place, the holiest place mortal ever held by right divine.

"Love is strong as death" (Cant. viii. 6), says the Holy Spirit; and one of the Greek fathers says of Mary on Calvary: "Her love was stronger than death, because she made the death of Christ her own." With all her anguish she had the grace to sincerely rejoice that her Son was doomed to die for the salvation of the world.

And yet, how deep a grief would surge into her soul even while this heroic contentment possessed it, since she had so deep a heart for sympathy and its lowest

depths were stirred by her own Son's crucifixion before her very eyes. St. Athanasius thus pictures her: "Mary stood most firmly and most patiently in her faith in Jesus. For when the disciples fled, and all men stood aloof from Him, to the glory of the whole sex, amidst the countless sufferings of her Son, she alone remained firm and constant in her faith. She was, indeed, a beautiful sight, adorned with her virgin modesty, for her great and bitter sorrow did not disfigure her. She reviled not, she murmured not, she asked not from God to be avenged of her enemies. But she stood as a perfectly self-restrained, modest virgin, and most patiently, though full of tears, drowned in grief."

Abraham was given grace to offer up his son Isaac, who was a type of the Redeemer. And Mary, was not she the mother of the Redeemer Himself? What must have been her graces in offering up Jesus to the eternal Father for the sins of mankind?

Jesus had three comforts on Calvary. One was the saving of the penitent thief, the other was the precious boon of praying for the pardon of His enemies in the very frenzy of their rage, smothering with His prayers the flames of their hate as it burst from their hearts in blasphemies and curses. O welcome privilege to a forgiving spirit. The third solace was the company of His mother, the only mortal being who could appreciate rightly all His acts and His words and His torments, and read even His very thoughts of atoning love for His fallen race.

Once He had almost resented His mother's message asking to speak with Him, when He was absorbed in teaching the multitudes: "Who is My mother and My

brethren?" He exclaimed; "and looking around upon them that sat about Him, He saith: behold My mother and My brethren" (Mark iii. 33, 34). Many a long day she had waited for Him as He labored at the instruction of the people. Now all that part of His task is done, and the task of dying for the people begins. In the supreme agony of His love, O how welcome is His mother's form and face as He sees her approaching, and how sweet to His ear her tender tones of consolation. When in full career as the teacher of mankind her company was a luxury He would not enjoy, except rarely. Now it is a necessity to Him, for He is abandoned by men and forsaken by His Father.

Who is My mother? The Mother of Sorrows is My mother, and the Mother of Mercies. She is My best comforter, better far than the angel in the Garden who brought Me but a drop of heavenly balm. For who is My mother? The Queen of Angels is My mother, overflowing with a sympathy more than heavenly. She alone knows all, and she alone with Me has ventured all, that men may be saved. Make way for My mother, that she may have her heart pierced for My sake and the sake of men's salvation; this is My best consolation. Make way for My mother, for I will give her to My disciple and to all of My brethren as their mother forever.

It is a very general belief that Mary, by some miracle of love, is present at the deathbed of every friend of Christ. Oh may God make this true of the poor sinner who writes these words, and of every one who reads them.

CHAPTER VII.

Third Word (concluded). The Adoption of St. John.

When Jesus, therefore, had seen His mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own (John xix. 26, 27).

Had Jesus arranged this adoption with Mary beforehand? We have every reason to think so. At the parting interview between these two beings, who had for so many years lived a life all their own, they had agreed to extend its privileges to us in the person of the disciple whom Jesus loved. Through the Apostle John all the members of the Apostolic Church are introduced into Mary's life, that "garden enclosed" (Cant. iv. 12) of every celestial joy. And this gift of Jesus to us was a wonderful event, even amid the marvels of that day and place.

In Jesus' address to Mary from the cross, the word "woman" sounds peremptory and almost rude, "Dost thou so address Thy most sweet mother," asks St. Chrysostom, in his comment on this scene, "who so carefully fed Thee, reverently handled Thee, and sweetly suckled Thee? But He so spoke to her because it was not then a time for speaking gently to her nor uttering the name of mother, lest by speaking sweetly to her the heart of the Blessed Virgin would have broken; the tenderness

of the maternal name might have overwhelmed her mother's heart."

When Jesus said: "Behold thy son," one might have thought that He meant, Behold Me! Behold thy Son, Jesus, crucified; look at Me nailed to this cross, Me whom thou hast ever loved so well. Thou rememberest at Bethlehem how My first infantile glance said to thee: Behold thy Son—thou wert the first to look upon Me. I wish thy loving looks and words, which were ever My dearest joy, to comfort Me now in My last moments. Behold thy Son! But no; such is not His meaning. Jesus is not thinking of Himself, but of us, as He says to Mary: Behold thy son.

"How wonderful!" exclaims one of the early commentators. "How doth He honor His disciple in making him His brother. How good it is to stand by the cross, and to abide close to Christ in His sufferings!"

No word of response from either Mary or John is recorded. Doubtless the heart of John beat with a new grace of love, and Mary opened wide the door of her sacred affections to welcome her newborn child, thus given to her on Calvary; and the tears of these two virgins flowed more sweetly together—and again more bitterly, after the act of the adoption. Words, forsooth; what words could John, or even Mary find which would be worthy of giving to Jesus, to pay Him for these marvelous words of love.

"Behold thy mother," said the Master to His favorite disciple. All that it has meant to Me to be her Son now becomes thy privilege; all that she was to Me she is to be to thee. In persecution betake thyself to her, and in every disappointment and affliction. In doubt she

will be to thee a chair of wisdom. I ever found her the best of mothers; so shalt thou.

Thus did Christ, who had the evening before given us Himself as our heritage in His sacrament of "the New Testament" (Luke xxii. 20), now execute a codicil to that His last will and testament, bequeathing us likewise His own mother to be and remain ours forever. Thus, too, John is the fitting executor for this our heritage, he being the Eucharistic disciple; and he is also our proxy in the custody of Mary and the enjoyment of her motherly favor. This instrument of adoption Jesus signs with His blood.

How often in after years Mary and John must have recalled this strange message, binding the mother of the only-begotten to a newly granted son, given on Calvary by the beloved Master of the one and the divine Son of the other; and, lo! while He makes the generous gift He is gradually passing away.

"The Blessed Virgin," says Hugh of St. Victor, "was given as a mother not only to John, but to the whole Church; and to all sinners was she assigned as a mother by those words: Behold thy mother. O words of comfort: Behold thy mother. For she is the mother of God and of man, the mother of the criminal and of the judge. It is not fitting that discord should be allowed to reign among sons. For if, O sinner, Mary is thy mother, then Jesus is thy brother, and His Father is thy Father, and His kingdom thine inheritance; then the grace of Mary, which she found with God, is thy treasure. Therefore, love and venerate her as if everywhere with thee, and from this hour take her to thine own, so that she may at last receive thee into glory."

John "took her to his own"; his home, his own personal care, and all those affectionate attentions which would make her happy. And he received the singular grace to be entirely at home in Mary's company, reverent, indeed, beyond expression, but with no mixture of fear; their life reproducing as nearly as possible the peace and sanctity of the holy family at Nazareth. Nor is any one of us debarred that same favor, for no trait of a devout Christian life is plainer than the fearless and familiar affection we bear to the mother of Jesus.

Mary, on her part, felt greatly honored by this sacred ceremony of our adoption. It made her more than ever a sharer in her Son's prerogatives—He is pastor and Redeemer and teacher and pattern of us, and she is now proclaimed and instituted our mother. Her heart thanked Him tenderly for His thoughtfulness of her wishes, amid such pain of body and anguish of mind, thinking of what she desired most of all—to have the fullest possible share a mere mortal could have in procuring the eternal salvation of men's souls. The dignity of a mother is best shown by her love for her children, Mary's love for her divine Son is now so extended that it fills even her capacity for loving—she is to love as a mother every one whom her Son loves as a brother and Redeemer. His characteristic trait is love for sinners, and hers is made the same.

All this modifies our feeling that the exchange of Jesus, the Son of God, for John, the son of Zebedee, was to Mary poor exchange indeed. It was not exchange but extension of sonship and motherhood. Jesus is all the more dearly Mary's Son because we have been made more closely His brethren.

And, too, John was shortly to become a most lovable son, one of the masterpieces of the grace of Christ. After the coming of the Holy Ghost, Mary could watch with motherly interest the workings of the divine spirit in that soul, and assist the disciple in his spiritual growth as no other mortal could, for she is a powerful queen in the realm of Christian virtue.

And especially in that of chastity. In giving the virgin Apostle to His virgin mother, Jesus paid high praise to chastity. It is a virtue hard to practice. Yet it is conspicuously and triumphantly an adornment of His followers. He has made it a special requisite for the men who govern His Church; He has committed the care of His best loved, the outcasts and destitute, to a vast army of virgin women; He has chastened with this virtue the state of Christian matrimony itself, removing far from it the defilements of sensuality.

Besides chastity Christ honored by this double gift of motherhood and sonship the virtue of filial affection. "Honor thy father and mother," he had commanded of yore, "that thy days may be long in the land that I shall give thee" (Exodus xx. 12). And so John, honoring his mother Mary, outlived all the other Apostles many years in the Church of Christ. This was to reward his affectionate care of her, his solicitude for her comfort, and his offices of religion and his tears of sorrow at her happy death.

We must not forget the Magdalen, who was chosen by our mother to be her close companion that day. Jesus had said: "When I shall be lifted up above the earth, I shall draw all things unto me" (John xii. 32), even the most opposite. For what could be more opposite than

Mary of Nazareth and Mary of the seven devils? There stood they together, united most affectionately and most appropriately. For the same love of Jesus which had preserved His mother immaculate from the first instant of her creation, had saved and perfectly cleansed the harlot's soul by the grace of sincere contrition after a career of degrading vice. And now both Jesus and Mary would have Magdalen present on Calvary; her tears of penance had won for her that privilege. Is not this a great consolation for us poor penitents?

CHAPTER VIII.

The Fourth Word: "Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?"

And it was almost the sixth hour; and when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour; and the sun was darkened. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying: Eloi! Eloi! lamma sabacthani? Which is, being interpreted: My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me? And some of the standers by hearing, said: Behold, this Man calleth Elias (Matt. xxvii. 45-47; Mark xv. 34, 35; Luke xxiii. 44, 45).

The portents in the sun and sky began soon after Jesus was lifted into the air, just at the hour of noon. The darkening sun, as if affronted by the crime now being perpetrated, admonished mankind of God's wrath. And this darkness in the air was also a sign of the gloom Jesus felt in His inmost soul. Ever since entering the Garden of Olives that soul had been groping in darkness, sadly feeling its way by the slender thread of divine hope—slender even if sure; abandoned to evil men and their passions, helpless and alone.

It is true that when the air thickened with darkness, this afforded our Redeemer some relief, because it partly veiled from the vulgar gaze His naked form. But the outer gloom drove Him deeper into His inner desolation. He lost something He valued when He could no longer see the sun; the bright sky had been a comfort to Him. Light and hope go together. It would seem as if

nothing were now left to console Him except the presence of His beloved mother and His ever-cherished power of pardoning His enemies. It was hard that the brightness of His native skies was denied Him at the last. God seemed yet more distant from His bereaved spirit when the glory of the heavens was smirched with darksome gloom.

Yet He knew that the primary cause of the portent was to impress men's souls with fear, and lay a weight of foreboding on them, and thereby prepare them to confess at His death that He was indeed the Son of God. So that Jesus, who so greatly loved the light of day, was content to be shadowed with outer as well as inner darkness for the conversion of His persecutors.

Up to this point in His passion Jesus had plainly possessed a constant evenness of mind, at least after He had said: "Rise up, let us go," and had delivered Himself to Judas and his band. But now a despondency fell upon His spirit so dark that He began to complain—directing his voice, alas! towards the closed and darkened heavens. "Eloi! Eloi! lamma sabachthani. My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This exclamation puzzled the enemies of Jesus, and some of them said that He was calling upon Elias, mistaking Eloi for the prophet's name. Perhaps they only heard Him indistinctly; His voice may have been broken by sobs. Or, as St. Jerome surmises, it was some of the Roman soldiers who said this, imperfectly understanding our Redeemer's language, though knowing something of Elias from their acquaintance with the Jews.

We well know this prayer; it is the first words of the twenty-first Psalm. For Jesus herein acted as we do in

time of trial; as we take refuge in the familiar words of an Our Father or Hail Mary, so did Jesus, Hebrew as He was, call out to His Father in the familiar words of the Psalms, which were His usual and daily prayer.

He now chose a Psalm, the twenty-first, specially inspired for His passion and for this very hour of His dereliction. "O God, My God, look upon Me; why hast Thou forsaken Me? Far from My salvation are the words of My sins." Our sins were His shame; His soul resounded with their outcry of hate, almost deafening the voices of hope within Him. For the restoration of this comfort, for a return of the sense of hope, He implores His Father, reminding Him of His mercies of old: "In Thee have our fathers hoped; they have hoped and Thou hast delivered them. They cried to Thee and they were saved." Thus does Jesus compare himself with the men of old, the prophets and saints, who foretold Him and prepared the Israelites for His coming; He complains that they were heard when they prayed and He is not. "They trusted in Thee and were not confounded. But I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that saw Me have laughed Me to scorn. They have spoken with the lips and wagged the head. He hoped in the Lord, let Him deliver Him; let Him save Him, seeing He delighteth in Him. O depart not from Me! For tribulation is very near; for there is none to help Me. I am poured out like water; and all My bones are scattered. My heart has become like wax melting in the midst of My bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue hath cleaved to My jaws." And then, inasmuch as all His sufferings were a sin offering, Jesus would lay all His woes to the

terrible justice of the Father. "Thou hast brought Me down into the dust of death. For many dogs have encompassed Me; the council of the malignant hath besieged Me. They have dug My hands and feet. They have numbered all My bones. And they have looked and stared upon Me. They parted My garments amongst them; and upon My vesture they cast lots." Further on in His prayer, this wonderful psalm would lead Jesus, in words at least, and with however little of sensible feeling, to a return of hope; else would He not have chosen it. "He hath not slighted nor despised the poor man. Neither hath He turned away His face from Me; and when I cried to Him, He heard me."

Thus prayed our Redeemer for us in His desolation of spirit; and it was, perhaps, the most efficacious of all His petitions in our behalf. For although spoken for Himself, it was all meant for us. From the beginning to the end of His passion, He was ever interiorly treating with His Father about our eternal destiny, ever occupied with our spiritual needs, our obligations, our disobedience, our reconciliation. And as the Son pleaded for us, His brethren, the Father ever insisted on His suffering the uttermost rigor of justice as a condition of our pardon. This sank the soul of Jesus deeper and deeper into the gloom of hell, and wrung from Him—even from Him, the very pattern of fortitude—this cry of interior anguish. It was uttered with a loud voice, at least the first verses of the Psalm, the whole of which, we doubt not, He recited in His secret soul.

"Jesus cried out with a loud voice," says the evangelist. Before this, namely, at His arrest, when He complained to Judas of his treachery, His tones, if very press-

ing were yet calm; and also when He protested to the man who struck Him in Caiaphas' court; and yet again in His protest to Pilate. But now that He is complaining to God He would rend the very sky with His voice.

During His whole life His Father was ever with Jesus sensibly; He always felt His divine love within and His mighty hand without. He had but to will it, and the sea grew firm beneath His feet, the ruthless storm was stilled, cripples walked and leaped at His word, death itself gave up its grim sceptre at His command. And now His Father seems to Jesus to be vanished from His life, He is as helpless as a soul condemned at the judgment; and just herein is the explanation of how much Jesus suffers for that soul.

Once His Father sent Him angels; even in the Garden an angel came from heaven and comforted Him; the Father has now shut them off in this His Son's extremity of need. Instead of angels there are devils, and there are men who are worse. The demons are circling about Him in the air, and men are on the ground, all railing at Him as He is nailed helpless to the cross. The Holy Spirit, with whom He is one in essential being, that spirit named by Jesus Himself "the Comforter" (John xiv. 16), is seemingly absent and silent to His desolate soul.

A father is by right divine, aye and plight divine, the refuge of an afflicted child. Not so now as between God the Father and God the Son made Man; not any relief, not a whisper of encouragement from His Father in the gathering upon Jesus of the deep darkness of death. And such—let us always remember it—is the rightful penalty of our sins.

Many a Christian actually smiles in the midst of

death's cruellest torments, consoled by the sacraments, the outward symbols and inward gift of God's love. Such was not the death of Jesus. The fright first felt in the Garden was yet upon Him, and grew more fearful and harder to bear as the end drew nigh. One thought seemed to possess Him: My Father is the avenger upon Me of the sins of My brethren; I am made responsible for their wickedness, loathsome to Myself in My every faculty. The arrogant, malignant rebellion of My own flesh and blood, My own brethren, against our common Father is My soul's burden, and mine exclusively.

Oh, to us Good Friday is a day of uncounted mercies—both to the worst and the best of us. Let us often think how Jesus won these mercies that day, the only Man who felt the whole malice of sin because He atoned for it; because He was the Man-God. He was, we know well, conscious of God's goodness and pardon, but only in the remotest and most unsensitive regions of his soul.

To say that Jesus bled for us and died for us is, therefore, not enough. He bled and died for us feeling Himself to be our own sinful selves, suffering perfect retribution for our sins; and with all willingness, too. For if Jesus protested to His Father, it was rather to witness to us the extent of His love for us than any urgent desire of relief. He was free to dispense with all or any part of this terrible trial of mind; His Father and He, one in being, were one in purpose in the atonement. He could, with a single thought, open into His soul the flood gates of heavenly joy, sweep away all His enemies, and stand victorious among men and devils. He preferred what His Father willed—a victory of pain and dereliction and death to the less heroic conquest of superior force. May

He and His Father and His Holy Spirit be forever blessed and thanked for this, and may we ever be given grace to imitate Jesus in this union of the incomparable majesty of God with the tenderness of perfect brotherly sympathy. How powerful an advocate is He to become for us, since He can forever call the Father to witness that for our sakes He endured all that man and all that God could do to punish our sins.

Another lesson, one of much use to us, is this. In the article of death God is our only stay, for what human hand can either hinder death or banish its terrors? To Jesus, more than to any dying man before or since, God was the only reliance. And God had forsaken Him. He avows it to us, proclaims it to the world, loudly complains of it to His Father Himself: "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And the answer is: That Thou shouldst become the refuge of all forsaken souls ever created. The desolation of Jesus is our safeguard against despair, even against despondency; "His tears are our hope," as we once heard a devout preacher exclaim, and His abandonment earns our welcome by the Father. The fullness of this gift is not known to all; or indeed to any one who has not suffered the feeling of being forsaken by His heavenly Father while knowing that he sincerely loves Him. Then it is that we thank Jesus for His desolation on the cross, as well as for the comfort of His example to justify our complaints to heaven.

To love God disinterestedly, that is to say, to love Him and be haunted with the doubt that I shall never love Him hereafter, to love Him and trust Him in spite of a vivid sense that He does not love me and has cast me off forever, such is the state that finds relief in the cry of

Jesus: "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

And help is also found here to bear lesser evils; we may complain to God with filial confidence even when our cowardice repines against burdens imposed by His ordinary providence. For, as it was the human nature of Jesus that complained, so He would allow us to yield to human weakness by a prayer of affectionate protest. This, strange to say, wins the grace to understand the desolation of the cross, and, by the comparison, it shames us into a more courageous state of soul.

Finally, let us realize how readily Jesus will give comfort to the disconsolate, remembering as He does His own utter desolation of soul on Calvary. Afflicted hearts have a special claim upon Him. He is essentially the refuge of the forsaken, even those forsaken of God, as, for the moment, it seems to them. And I should know that when God *seems* to have abandoned me totally, He has then but placed me, as He did His Son, exclusively and especially under His protection.

To be deemed worthy to suffer this dereliction of soul is the privilege of the more courageous followers of Jesus crucified. They appreciate that one is never so perfectly in the hands of God as when God seems to have abandoned him totally to the will of his enemies, whether men or demons. For it is only then that God is adored and loved for His own sake alone, every present consolation given up, and every future compensation left blindly to His good pleasure.

CHAPTER IX.

The Fifth Word: "I Thirst!"

Afterwards Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst. Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar; and immediately one of them, running, took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar about hyssop, and putting it upon a reed, put it to His mouth, and gave Him to drink. Others said: Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to deliver Him. Jesus, therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said: It is consummated (Matt. xxvii. 48, 49; Mark xv. 36; John xix. 28-30).

When Jesus was very near death He made two complaints. One was to His Father: "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The other is to us: "I thirst!" And this last is the only complaint of bodily suffering that He made throughout His passion.

To know what a dying man's thirst is, ask physicians, especially surgeons who have ministered to the wounded after a battle; the moisture of the body in a grievously wounded man is dried up in its very sources. Jesus was now suffering from His death wounds at the end of His battle for us; and His extreme bodily weakness, together with His great loss of blood, caused Him a fiery thirst. This had tormented Him ever since His scourging, but He had borne it silently till now. This solitary complaint of corporal pain He will make one of His great Seven Words on the cross; it will, at this supreme moment, fitly describe the passion of His life, His longing for God

His Father, as well as His desire to save us from eternal loss. Besides that, it will make very prominent the special bodily pain He suffers to atone for the sin of drunkenness.

To say that Jesus was very thirsty, but feebly tells His condition. The last drop He had drunk was at the sacred supper the evening before. It was then that He showed what he would do for our thirst of soul and body, for He gave us His very blood to drink; and this day in heaven the remembrance of His thirst on the cross adds to His joy in bestowing a heavenly reward on a Christian who gives to a thirsty brother "a cup of cold water" (Mark ix. 40).

"Knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled"—all things except His death, and death was at hand. But Jesus would not yet die. Death did not immediately receive His signal to approach and do its worst upon Him. He stood death off, and He added another drop of bitterness to His cup, and He added to His precious words on the cross another brief sentence. Jesus said: "I thirst!"

A pot of vinegar had been placed there, but not for drinking, for who drinks vinegar?—but it was provided, together with a sponge and a twig of hyssop, to staunch the wounds of the malefactors, for these were always heavily scourged before execution. It was used to help keep alive the victims till they were crucified. Now, when Jesus cried out: "I thirst!" one of the guards, more cruel than the rest, instantly saw his opportunity to insult Him; and he ran to this vessel of vinegar and quickly fixing the sponge and hyssop on the end of a reed, possibly a walking stick offered by one of the Jewish elders, he filled the

sponge with vinegar, raised it up and thrust it into the face and mouth of Jesus. "The others said: Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to help Him." This taunt, intended for Jesus' ears, added bitterness even to the vinegar. The bitter drink, thus spiced with hate yet more bitter, Jesus drank and sucked out of the sponge as best He could.

Burning with thirst as He arrived at Calvary, Jesus, though He tasted, yet "would not drink" the wine offered Him before being nailed; thus saving His thirst that it might be all the more bitter after three hours of agony. And as He had then tasted the wine out of kindness towards those who offered it, yet no more than tasted it for the sake of enduring a greater suffering later on, so now He tasted the vinegar offered to Him; nay, St. John says He drank it; showing that He would, for our sakes, accept insult as readily as kindness, and even more readily.

Less than a week before His crucifixion, and while prophesying about the day of judgment, He affirmed that the kingdom of His Father was granted to those who gave Him to drink when He was thirsty, that is to say, as He is among us in the person of the poor. And now we, standing with His executioners, give Jesus in His own proper person vinegar to drink when He calls out: "I thirst!"

Drinking vinegar only made His thirst hotter than before. But he drank something besides the vinegar—He drank most humbly and with His very soul the insults poured into His ears as the vinegar was rudely thrust into His mouth. Thus He knew that they would not only kill Him, but also force Him to drink vinegar at His last gasp; for they must have known that His death was at

hand; and, in fact, Jesus expired a few minutes afterwards.

All this happened when Jesus felt that He had quite done His task and paid our ransom in full: "Knowing now that all things were accomplished."

This part of His atonement is, therefore, given us not only as food for sympathetic meditation, but for another reason also, and one equally characteristic of our Redeemer. Because His dying thirst is the pressing down and flowing over of the measure of merit He poured into His Father's bosom for us. And He would hereby also give for our edification a literal fulfilment of an ancient prophesy: "And they gave Me gall for my food, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink" (Ps. lxxviii. 22). He felt, too, as if He were drawing His enemies into closer reach of His grace. For if they themselves had been literally turned into the food appropriately representing their deeds, they would have been gall and vinegar; he longed to drink them into His very soul and there sweeten them with His love.

The whole incident shows how jealously He was guarded, and how carefully His friends were held off from His aid. This was by an express permission of His Father's providence, for they were very capable of relieving His pains, being, all but St. John, the devout women who had cared for His food and drink and shelter since His public ministry began; and they were led by His own mother. But Jesus willed to die without their aid, and with the fire of His bodily thirst fiercely raging, and the added pain of the bitter taste of vinegar. His last taste of earth was vinegar. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" (Ps. lxxx. 11), said God of old to Israel. And

now mouth and heart and soul of Christ are opened wide in a burning thirst of love—and filled full with men's hate. We forced Him to drink hate, He constrains us to drink love.

Besides our Redeemer's general purpose of suffering all possible pain for our salvation, He had a special aim in each particular affliction, according to its relation to some vice of ours. Thus, in accepting the kiss of Judas, He would atone for sacrilege; flagellation of His body He offered for impurity; He endured the humiliation of the crown of thorns for our pride; and He offered His death-thirst to His Father with a loud proclamation, to atone for one of our fearfulest vices, gluttonous drinking. If any word can arouse the dormant conscience of the drunkard and the convivialist it is this of Jesus crucified: "I thirst!" Says the prophet Joel: "Awake ye that are drunk and weep, and mourn all ye that take delight in drinking" (Joel i. 5). Awake, O drunkard, and hear that cry of thirst from your dying Redeemer, for to you it is chiefly addressed, and as He thirsts for your sake, so does that cruel soldier, in your stead, give Him vinegar to drink. Your intemperance is here singled out by Jesus for the reason of His only complaint of bodily suffering.

And if I should say: I am no drunkard and therefore this lesson is not for me, the answer is that if Jesus atoned for the sin of drunkenness by suffering thirst, why then should not I do likewise for His sake and for the sake of that same class of sinners? Jesus distinguished them from among all who need redemption, singling out their disgusting excess for a special act of atonement. May I not imitate His example? Is there any vice more filthy? Is any vice more fruitful of other vices, or more preva-

lent among Christians? Is there any co-operation with the love of Jesus for sinners more likely to please Him than a pledge of total abstinence in union with His sacred thirst? Hence, Holy Church favors such a pledge, especially during the season of Lent, when we more closely contemplate our Redeemer's passion and death; and she imparts generous indulgences to us when we sincerely say: "O Jesus! In union with Thy sacred thirst on the cross, I promise to abstain from intoxicating drink." Is not that an appropriate act for a Christian standing beneath the cross? Jesus has left me a divine formula for my total abstinence pledge, by which I voluntarily assume His thirst as my own, for the sake of drunkards and convivial drinkers.

But Jesus had a thirst far other than the one which tormented His throat and burned His blood. Nor do we mean here His master-thirst, his longing for His Father—what man ever thirsted for God as did this Man? We mean His thirst for our souls; and that was destined to be an eternal thirst. His body was presently beyond all thirst; but as the risen Jesus reigns this day in Heaven, He yet thirsts for our love. He was born with that yearning for our souls, lived and died and rose again with it and shall never be without it. And to His chosen ones He communicates it in ever-increasing ardor, till it is, as His was, a passionate desire to suffer and to die for men's salvation. His persecutors thirsted for His blood and He thirsted for their souls. What a thought is this, that Jesus, on the Cross, thirsted and was perishing of thirst for my soul.

I think of the full meaning of that word: "I thirst!" issuing from the parched lips of our dying Savior. In

His country, contiguous to vast arid wastes, thirst was a well-known plague of withering drouth upon fertile fields and of agonizing death to thousands of belated travelers. How vividly did it tell to the men of Palestine how much He suffered when they heard Him cry out: "I thirst!"

Thus His spirit longed for our love, and not even death has quenched that thirst, though His death cup was shortly to be placed at His lips and drained to the dregs. No words he ever uttered were truer of His state of mind about us than that wailing cry: "I thirst!" He longed for our salvation as a famishing man longs for a cold drink of water. A man perishing of thirst can do nothing but strive to find water, talks only of it; his very dreams are about finding and drinking water. Such a spiritual thirst is the love of Jesus for immortal souls—ever thinking of winning souls to love Him, working miracles for that end, praying and preaching to save them; and now dying to save souls. Having had that thirst always, no wonder that He gives it expression at last on Calvary.

We have said that the master-thirst of Jesus was longing for union with His Father. And this coincided perfectly with His desire for our salvation, which is but to give us a share of His own joy in His Father's heavenly home. The best trait of any man's life is longing for God. "Oh God! My God! to Thee do I watch at break of day, for Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee my flesh, oh, how many ways! In a desert land, and where there is no way and no water; so in the sanctuary have I come before Thee, to see Thy power and Thy glory" (Ps. lxii. 1-3). And what has my soul to do to be saved, but to desire God, to thirst for God? Which

means to long to be enlightened by infinite wisdom, embraced by infinite love, enraptured by eternal joy. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled" (Matt. v. 6).

Every soul thus thirsting is soon filled with God: "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall not thirst forever" (John iv. 13). And the first bestowal of the deity for the satisfaction of this divine thirst is in the Sacrament of Baptism, water and the Holy Ghost; and the fullness of God's gift of Himself is in eating and drinking the Eucharistic banquet, which "Shows forth the death of the Lord until He come" (I. Cor. xi. 26).

CHAPTER X.

The Sixth Word: "It Is Consummated."

Jesus, therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said: It is consummated (John xix. 30).

The vinegar was our Redeemer's last sorrow. His sorrows and ours had begun with the sweet but evil taste of the forbidden fruit in Eden; and all our woe is ended and our joys consummated by this bitter passion, typified by the draught of vinegar. He, therefore, publicly affirms that He has done His Father's will for our salvation, has done it all, done it perfectly. He thus looks forward to His accounting. Great were His pains as He spoke; but in spite of them, it was with a certain satisfaction of mind that He exclaimed: "It is consummated." It only remained for Him to die. He is now but repeating what He had said to His Father while praying for his Church the night before: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John xvii. 4). Then he referred especially to the Eucharist, which is the perfection of the Father's love, and which He had just instituted; and the Eucharist is the memorial of the death He is now about to die.

He had often suffered, by anticipation, all the penalties our sins merited, and especially so in the Garden of Olives; He now recalls them to mind and sums them up. And as He considers them as almost over and done, a sense of profound relief is mingled with their parting

bitterness. Then, looking to His approaching death, he says to His Father: "All is finished."

He also reckoned with His Father, by a final rehearsing in his mind of the sacred prophecies about His atonement, and He says: All things are now accomplished that Thy scriptures may be fulfilled. And every inspiration of Thy Spirit to Me has been perfectly obeyed, even to exceed the stated measure of the ancient decrees against sin—all Thy will is now fulfilled.

He had set out upon his passion, determined to finish completely His allotted task, saying: "All things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man" (Luke xviii. 31), and this He said with dauntless resolution. And now with nearly His latest breath He says: O My Father, all is accomplished. It is the end at last—the darkest moment of these dark hours, the sharpest of all My pains, My death, is very near. It will, indeed, be a yet more affrighting realization of the guilt of the race I love so well, and of the injury they have done to Thy Sovereign Majesty; but then My work will be done. From birth to death every task is done—except the very last pangs and the final exit of My soul from this poor body; My spirit, trembling upon the verge of death, now proclaims its mission finished and over. My sacrifice of love is perfect—not one possible act of love for God or man has been omitted, nor is any quality of it lacking that could in the very least degree be further perfected. It is finished, I have given all; I have done all!

At this ending of His career as Redeemer of the world, Jesus recalls the beginning: "He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21), was the divine

decree. It is now that He makes final answer to love's question, a question incessantly ringing in His ears from the day He was conceived in His mother's womb: What hast Thou done for the salvation of My people? I have done everything, "It is consummated." I have suffered for their sakes, O My Father, the loss of everything a man holds dear—honor, peace, friends, temporal and bodily welfare; I have this hour seen My own mother's soul pierced with a sword; I have accepted for Thy people's sake all that man hates or dreads: persecution, disgrace, horror of soul; I was for their sake handed over to the unchecked malice of My enemies and Thine; and, having done all that even Thy strictest justice could demand in reparation for Thy people's rebellion, I have added yet more from My desire to overflow the measure of justice with the surplus of love. I am now on the point of expiring for them. Let divine love ask: What hast Thou done for the salvation of My people? I answer: I have accomplished their salvation.

Such were the thoughts of our Redeemer as, with death knocking loudly at the door, He made a final reckoning with His Father. This was His first duty, to be able to say: My Father's Will is done; it is done, finished, consummated; not one of His children and My brethren but is completely ransomed if he but will it.

But this is not all; Jesus must reckon with us. The same accounting made to His Father He must make to us, for He is our representative. He says, therefore, to us, all and every one, that He has redeemed us. He tells us that He has offered for us to His Father a love entirely divine, yet owned and possessed by a heart entirely human, entirely our own—a divine gift, yet owned and

offered by one of ourselves and wholly on our account. He has, He tells us, received from the Father the long list of our debts, and He has blotted them all out by His blood, affixing the handwriting of fate to His cross, and then reversing the sentence absolutely and finally (Coll. ii. 14). O joyful tidings! Jesus has saved us, He has accomplished our redemption from sin and hell; He proclaims it even now from the very spot on which it is consummated, at the very moment of the final payment of our ransom; He proclaims it to God and man.

He is our Redeemer because He completed His work. He never looked back, once He had put his hand to the plough. For our salvation every action of His whole life had been expressly motivated; and particularly during His passion had He fixed His soul's purpose upon us, one and all, not excluding the very worst. O sinners, you who spend the best and longest years of your lives in utter forgetfulness of your eternal welfare, you are at last saved, because Christ, the Son of God, never forgot you and your salvation a single hour of His whole life, at the very end of which He says to you: Your redemption is consummated.

When shall I say the same words to Him? It is consummated. Lord, cause these, Thy words, to echo loudly in my heart, till they force me to some worthy return of Thy love. Let me begin now, so that at the end of life I may be ready to say to Thee: It is consummated, my task is done, Thy love has entirely conquered me. Thou didst give me Thy Godhead, I have given Thee my poor manhood, my mind with all its convictions, my heart with all its affections, my body with all its members and senses, my death with all its pains.

It is in the Blessed Eucharist that our Savior leaves us His chosen memorial of His death, and all its lessons are best taught in that sacrament. His dearest love for us is there ever shown forth until He come again. The Eucharist is our daily reminder of His consummation, His Father's mercy proved, and, no less, His Father's justice vindicated at His Son's cost. While assisting at Holy Mass, and especially when communicating, we receive from Jesus for our benefit what His Father received from Him for the satisfaction of the divine justice. Here is the summing up of all that our life means to Him, and all that He wills our death should be to Him. It is at the altar that we learn how to say truthfully to Jesus: It is finished; the work Thou gavest me to do is done.

CHAPTER XI.

The Seventh Word: "Father, Into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit."

And Jesus again crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit (Matt. xxvii. 50; Mark xv. 37; Luke xxiii. 46).

These words of our dying Savior are the sixth verse of the thirtieth Psalm, one of the most beautiful songs of hope the troubled spirit of man ever sung. Jesus, we may be sure, silently recited the preceding verses from the beginning, His purpose being to offer God, as His last praise of Him on earth, a salutation and a prayer of perfect confidence.

Jesus could but feebly murmur the earlier verses of the Psalm, His strength being almost gone. For be it remembered that all of these words from the cross were spoken by Him while death was immanent. After the shock of the nailing and the first pangs of hanging from the nails, any moment, He knew quite well, might be His last. Every word He spoke was full of the earnestness of death.

How very great, then, is the honor He does mercy and hope, since His dying messages—quite ignoring the justice of God—are either an inspiration of hope to us or a dispensation of mercy from the Father. We can hereby easily see what kind of religious sentiments the heart of our dying Redeemer was full of.

Yet justice was not absent from Calvary, resting, as it did, dark and stern upon Him, though upon Him alone. Never had He felt the weight of our sins so heavy, never so conscious that in our stead He was the malefactor of all ages. The intensity of His loathing for our wickedness was now far beyond any previous sensation of it; but in the conflict with His pity for us, every other sentiment went down in utter defeat.

There is high praise in all this for the divine virtue of hope. For think what a victim of sovereign justice Jesus was on Calvary. See the sufferings of His wounded body, nailed to the cross; hear the sadness in the tones of His voice; see the agony pictured in His face. And what is all this but a feeble show of the terrors and sorrows of His soul? Never had He felt such fullness of woe as at this last moment of His atonement, because He never had so fully appreciated the wrongs His Father had suffered from us. No one ever died with a thousandth part of the sadness of Jesus. It wrung from Him His loud cry: "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But this was soon followed by the words: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," the strong feeling of abandonment being immediately overtaken and overcome by the stronger feeling of confidence. Thus it was that at the moment when Jesus most vividly realized the enormity of our sins He felt most sure of His Father's pardon of them.

Since Jesus cried out from the cross: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," despair is a rare and difficult sin. It would seem that to show a peculiar trait of His love for us He would make the bad end of Judas, if He could, the last act of despair ever to be committed.

We have supposed that He recited the first five verses of the Psalm in the feeble whisper of his fast ebbing powers. The words are worthy of his choice: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded; deliver me in Thy justice. Bow down Thine ear to me; make haste to deliver me. Be Thou unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge to save me. For Thou art my strength and my refuge, and for Thy name's sake Thou wilt lead me and nourish me. Thou wilt bring me out of this snare, which they have hidden for me; for Thou art my protector."

Thus far Jesus came when His forces began to fail Him, and He knew that the end was come. With a last effort, therefore, he rallied all his strength to recite aloud the sixth verse, His last words. He lifted His drooping head, directed His tearful eyes into the murky air above, and "crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit"—and in another moment He had passed away.

It was the vehemence of His loving trust in His Father that thus overcame the peremptoriness of death itself. And notice, too, that he added to the words of the Psalmist that name Father, so often on His lips in life, as it was ever in His heart, and now so sweet to Him in death. Such was the prayer of Jesus, the last spasmodic effort of His once powerful physical nature acting in obedience to the ruling principle of His life.

We must remember that ever since He entered the Garden of Olives, the interior life of Jesus was a continual intensifying of His purpose to save sinners, by perfectly repenting for them, enduring every conceivable penalty for them, and, finally dying for them—all this

while treating directly with His Father for their salvation. This is now ending. Therefore His soul absorbs our souls into itself more completely than ever before, for His final effort in our behalf. And this, His purpose to redeem us, is completely achieved by an act of trustful love of God, made both for Himself and for us; it is a conviction of God's goodness so certain, a feeling so secure, as rightly to be called the supreme act of our Savior's life, as it is the last: "Father, unto Thy hands I commend My spirit." Let us never forget that here He speaks for us as well as for Himself. St. Athanasius, therefore, says: "When Christ said on the cross, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit, He commends all men to the Father, to be by Him and through Him restored to life."

According to St. Paul, we are members of Christ's "body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Eph. v. 30), being made one body, indeed, with Him in our membership of His Church. Now this corporal and visible union is for the imparting to us of an interior union with His soul, in divine faith, hope and love. It is for this end that Jesus now, together with His own soul, breathes forth our souls into His Father's bosom, and He does so with a loud call of loving confidence.

We should often think of this last prayer of Jesus, especially when we lie down to sleep and our souls escape from us into the death-like darkness of night. Hence Holy Church in Her office of complin, her last prayer before going to rest at night, causes us to recite this same Psalm that Jesus did, stopping at the place where death stopped Him: "Into Thy hands I commend My spirit." And, at the moment of death, many saints and many sin-

ners have used the same words, thereby joining their souls to Christ's soul as they passed from this world into the merciful Father's hands.

Furthermore, what an example is this of how we are to receive crosses? From the little annoyances of daily life, as well as from the awful pangs of death, our refuge must be loving adoration of the Providence of God, submission immediate and entire to the divine will, implicit confidence in God's goodness—no bitterness of spirit, no aversion to enemies, no envying of any fancied happier lot of others. One of our greatest drawbacks in the spiritual life is failing to understand how adorable are the divine permissions of affliction—no less so than God's positive providences of joyful events.

Hope is the virtue here honored by Jesus, one often deficient in those who have even sincere faith and ardent charity. Some good souls are in the habit of expressing a doubt of their salvation—not because they are suffering from some special aridity of spirit and are not masters of their saddened feelings, but because they fancy such diffidence is real humility. Our Redeemer would reprove such a course. For the last word that Jesus spoke was one of hope. The closing lesson of our Master is confidence in God. All who know the shortcomings of devout souls, appreciate the need of this virtue for their progress in perfection.

Our Redeemer would say of His final prayer: Although all My words are precious to thee, My last ones are more precious than any others, and now My very last lesson is this—confide in God's goodness; He was never known to reject one who called Him Father. And if thou thinkest thou hast nothing but sin to give Him, I as-

sure thee thou art in error, thou hast thy soul, and that He values equal to My life, for I paid that price for it, I, His beloved Son and thy brother. Therefore, say to Him, with Me: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

Let every one of us learn this lesson well. God's hands are my treasury, both for giving out His graces and storing up my merits. From them I receive all my good, into them I pour all my joys and sorrows, my thoughts and affections, in the day of my repentance, and every other day, even to the last. And at the hour of my death I will give over to Him my soul with every confidence—into His hands and His heart, never known to reject a penitent sinner, I commend my spirit.

Give me, O my Father, in exchange for my spirit, which I now offer Thee, the treasures of Thy Son's spirit, deep sorrow for my sins, tender sympathy for the fallen, gentle patience with my enemies. O God, let me see Thy hand in every happening of my life; and especially reveal Thy goodness to me when I am near to death. May I live and die guided by Thy hand. In adversity, may I kiss Thy hand that smites me; and especially when, at the end, Thy hand deals me the hard stroke that places me wholly in Thy possession, may I have the grace to say, in all sincerity: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

PART VII.

THE DEATH OF JESUS AND HIS BURIAL.

CHAPTER I.

"No Man Taketh My Life Away From Me."

No man taketh [My life] away from Me; but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down; and I have power to take it up again (John x. 18).

And Jesus again crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit. And saying this, and bowing His head, He gave up the ghost (Matt. xxvii. 50; Mark xv. 37; Luke xxiii. 46; John xix. 30).

We are now to meditate on the death of Jesus. Before doing so, it behooves us to enter reverently into the sanctuary of His thoughts, and to consider with what generosity He gave to His Father and bestowed on us His bodily life, after having suffered beforehand all that man's cruelty could inflict upon Him, all that God's justice could impose. Hereby we shall learn how Jesus in His death mingled obedience and liberty in a perfect oblation of love.

Our meditation on the last words of Jesus, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," has shown us the filial confidence of our Redeemer in His Father's mercy. It was His great act of hope. It was also an act of perfect obedience. The supreme majesty of His Father,

outraged by sin, is appeased by this awful obedience of His Son, the rebellious sinner's own brother and proxy, obedient "unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8).

During His whole life He had no other rule but His Father's will. So on the cross, He prayed, preached, and suffered under that divine guidance, prayed for His enemies, preached God's mercy to them and all mankind, suffered inconceivable pains; and now suffers the extreme penalty of our sins—all because this was the will of His Father: "For as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of One, many shall be made just" (Rom. v. 19). His thoughts at the very last are immovably fixed upon the divine good pleasure. He bows His head to that only guide of His existence, and expires.

And this was a most willing obedience, for He laid His life down freely. For His Father guided Him without compelling Him, using the authority of a Father's love rather than the compulsion of a Master's rights. Hence Jesus, as we have seen, added to the Psalmist's utterance, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit," the word Father, increasing thereby the dignity of His act of obedience by the infusion of filial love. The death of our Redeemer was the freest of all possible acts, though it was an act of conformity to another's will.

Jesus would show, too, by the loudness of His voice as He proclaimed His obedience, that, however reduced He might be to a deathly extremity of weakness, He could yet command all His natural powers, if He so wished, for His Father's honor and our edification. Thus, says St. Augustine: "The spirit of the Mediator

left not His body against His will, but because of it, when He willed it and as He willed it; for man was blended into union with the Word of God." Hence He had said beforehand: "No man taketh away My life from Me, but I have power to lay down My life and I have power to take it up again" (John x. 18). That power has a clear voice, even in the very last gasp of death, to claim the right of Sonship with the most high God, and to utter a loud resounding word of hope to all His brethren. Hence the carefully chosen expressions in the sacred narrative describing His death: "He gave up the ghost," "He expired," that is, He breathed His last; rather than the words, He died.

Jesus thus gave up His soul willingly. For He does not say, Out of my body, O Father, dost Thou drag forth My spirit; but, into Thy hands I entrust and commend it, as the soul of Thy child, as free as I am obedient, and now dying in the stead of all Thy disobedient children freely enslaved to Thy enemies. Hence, we repeat, this cry of Jesus He made the loudest utterance He gave forth from the cross, though spoken at the moment of expiring.

It is, therefore, to be noted that this word was Jesus' inner offering of His death, no less than His outer conformity to God's will. He gives up His soul before the moment of actual separation has come. And this is the solemn act that saves us, namely, the intention Christ had in dying, free, entirely and supremely His own master, all the more perfectly so because choosing to do His Father's will. As if he said: Father, I give Thee My soul, and with it the souls of all mankind; My soul is My own to give, their souls I likewise own, because I

have bought them with a great price. My soul and their souls I commend to Thy loving mercies.

It was, again, by His own preference and of His own free choice, that He died by crucifixion, and was not otherwise put to death. He might have sunk into His mother's arms as He arrived at Calvary, and died in that holy embrace, breathing His last sigh resting upon the heart He loved best in the whole world. But He had rather die nailed to the arms of the cross, than folded in the arms of His mother, identified with sinners to the very end—a choice made wholly for our sakes, and one to which His mother as freely and for the same motives consented.

Although His human nature was tortured till it sunk to the verge of death, and life could no longer naturally continue, yet His God-head was united with it, and could, if He so willed, have renewed His natural strength at any moment and to any degree. But He would ask of it no more than a momentary rally of His forces, to offer in a loud voice a plain evidence of His freedom.

And, oh! how willingly did He die, since death was the perfection of His love for us, esteemed by Him the highest of His privileges from the very beginning of His existence as a child of Adam. Thus, though death was hard to Jesus, and He felt all the shrinking any man could feel from that last and sharpest pang, yet "God commendeth His charity towards us; because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8, 9); "because He loved us and delivered Himself up for us" (Gal. ii. 20). Therein is our every hope.

Of all the acts of His life, Jesus loves His death best. Hence the evening before, in preparing His disciples for His crucifixion, He revealed to them that His death was to be more than an event, even the greatest, in His career; it was to be a perpetual institution, retained and renewed among them forever. Midway in His long and affectionate discourse he instituted the Blessed Eucharist, giving them and us His body and blood, and His soul and divinity as a perpetual sacrifice, identical with the offering of Calvary. Hence St. Paul: "As often as ye shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come" (I. Cor. xi. 26).

It was the will of Jesus as He died, that His whole religion should centre about the sacrifice of Calvary as commemorated and reproduced on our altars, and that all the virtue that went out from His cross at His death should be distributed in superabundance in every place and at every hour, by the sacrifice of the Mass. The very same love which atoned with all pain for our sins, now by the same act, perpetuated in all joy, makes that atonement effectual to each one of us and for all time. How much holier are Mass and communion to us when studied with "the mind of Christ" (I. Cor. ii. 16), the mind of Jesus expiring on Calvary.

CHAPTER II.

"And Bowing His Head, He Gave up the Ghost."

And bowing His head, He gave up the ghost (John xix. 30).

How very slow must have seemed the approach of death to our Lord on the cross. How often did He think the end was come, only to learn that His Father had yet something more to ask from Him for our sakes,—inspiring one more plea for mercy upon us; or yet another act of loving submission to the divine will, so that paradise might be won more surely for penitent sinners; a yet stronger lesson of humility and patience might be taught to a world lost in self-indulgence and pride.

The crucifixion was a long series of literally excruciating bodily pains endured without intermission, relaxation, or rest of any kind, with a mind a prey to shame, wholly uncomforted by any prospect of relief whatsoever. The sufferings of the crucifixion were relieved only by death.

Jesus was in perfect possession of His faculties throughout those interminable three hours, as His occasional utterances plainly show; there was no oblivion from torment by swooning, nor any interval of stupefaction of mind.

We may well agree with those who say that Jesus kept Himself alive on the cross by a miracle of fortitude. Consider all that had happened to Him of bodily torture since He sweat blood the night before, and the consequent

strain upon His nerves. The whole night long He was beaten and insulted in an incredibly painful manner—it is a wonder that he was alive at daybreak. From sunrise till noon He had been hounded by the chief priest and a riotous mob, scourged, crowned with thorns, and then wantonly and ferociously misused by Pilate's soldiers. At noon He was condemned to death, laden with His cross, and with every circumstance of shame led to execution, then nailed to His cross and left hanging there in inconceivable agony. Yet only after three hours did death conquer His resolute resistance, His iron purpose to exhaust His every capacity for sorrow and pain. And when three o'clock came and death at last overwhelmed Jesus with its final onslaught, it was only because He willed it to be so. He had finished His work and was ready for His Father's reckoning.

And so the end at last is come. He begins to feel His vital forces drawing away from Him; His heart rather flutters than beats, and His head sinks feebly down. Between his blue lips His breath is drawn in and given forth only with a terrible effort, and a cold sweat breaks out upon Him. There is no mistaking these signs, they are death's dread ensigns hoisted at last on the citadel of life. Jesus knows that His time is come; He has never felt such exhaustion of bodily powers, and, alas! never known so deep a sadness of spirit.

We have seen what happened then—a last effort of our Redeemer's expiring heart. Slowly and by the final rally of His dying energies, His face is lifted upward and His fading eyes gaze into the darkened heavens; "Father," He cries with convulsive effort, "into Thy hands I commend My spirit." The words burst from a

heart palpitating with the soul's imperative struggle to be free.

With the very words came the throes of death, and they were the sharpest pains He ever felt; and with them there settles on His spirit a gloom more oppressive than at any time before. With the last word He spoke, His breath faltered; an icy chill was felt in His limbs and began to creep toward His very heart, that devoted heart, which can no longer drive His stagnating blood upon its errands of life and love. It seemed to His dimming faculties that not His strength but His very being was giving way, and that He now hung by the nails no better than a mangled carcass of butcher's meat.

Yes, Jesus is dying, His end is come. He seems to behold the spectre form of His Father's executioner, death, approaching. He bends His poor thorn-crowned head in submission to that relentless messenger of doom, whose hand, as it touches Him, withers up His bodily life—darkness settles thick upon Him, His muscles quiver and relax, His heart stops, a few feeble gasps for breath, and all is still. The body hangs limp and motionless. Jesus is dead.

Thus He died, our Redeemer, and God's only-begotten Son, our advocate, our teacher, our only hope, our only joy. From the turmoil of Calvary's horrors the soul of Jesus thus passed into the tranquillity of the Godhead.

He is dead. But how rich a legacy has He left us by His merits. Consider the priceless truth of God in our Catholic faith; the divine spirit Himself in all the Church's sacraments for our interior cleansing and enlightenment and sanctification; His own self, body and blood, soul and divinity, in the Eucharist, through which

greatest of sacraments He has bequeathed us a perpetual reminder of His passion and death. Consider the maxims of His Gospel and the example of His life, so fitly perfected by His passion and death. O let us forever thank God for the death of Jesus and for the graces and the lessons of Calvary.

O Jesus, when the angel of death came to summon Thee, bowing down Thy head in lowly reverence Thou gavest up Thy spirit to him, obedient to Thy Father's call. And what shall I do when my call comes? Jesus, teach me how to die. May I be then most reverently submissive to my Father who made me, most firmly confiding in Thee, my Redeemer, who saved me, mindful of Thy death for me upon the cross, my failing heart directed to the charity of God and the patience of His Son (II. Thes. iii. 5) in that dread hour of my final passage.

How different is death since the death of Jesus. He has led our captivity captive (Eph. iv. 8). In surrendering to our fell enemy, the monster death, Jesus mastered it; and He drew its sting, extracting and exhausting the venom of sin (Heb. ix. 28), which alone makes death terrible. And how changed is death since then, when we witness it in those we love.

The cross of Jesus has become the banner of a new and universal order of knighthood, in which valor saves its friends and conquers its enemies by suffering and dying for them.

The death of Christ was His greatest act and the one most characteristic of Him. From this it follows that if I am to know Him well I must know Him crucified; and if I aspire to proficiency in Christian wisdom, then must I be able to say: "I judged not myself to know anything

among you, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I. Cor. ii. 2), I must often read the history of His passion and death, and meditate on it devoutly, especially at Mass and communion, which are its perpetual memorial and the distributing point of all its favors. If I am to preach His doctrine, I must, by preference, discourse to the people upon the disease which He accomplished at Jerusalem (Luke ix. 31), making sinners beat their breasts and exclaim: "Indeed this Man was the Son of God." If I am to set a good example to others, I must do as He did—men must say of me: He is ready to die for us, whether we be his friends or his foes. Even my bodily life must plainly show the wounds of the Lord Jesus (Gal. vi. 17); my inner life must be hidden with Christ in God, dead to all self-seeking (Col. iii. 3); zealous for souls, and ready to fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for His body, which is His Church, and for all sinners (Col. i. 24); and finally, I must be able to say—if I have well learned the lesson of Calvary: "For me, to live is Christ; and to die is gain" (Phil. i. 21). O cure of an ignoble life! O sweet longing to die for Christ and for the souls that He loved unto death!

By the death of Christ we learn the worth of a soul, and the meaning of the oft-repeated words, an immortal soul. Do you wish to know it well? Listen to St. Augustine's valuation of a human soul: "Behold His wounds as He hangs, behold His blood as He dies, calculate the worth of His dying. Behold His scars as He rises again, His head bent down to kiss, His heart opened to love, His arms extended to embrace, His whole body displayed to redeem."

To be content not to know why the Son of God suf-

ferred Himself to be put to death, is for a Christian the capital sin of sloth most interiorly committed. To be content not to bring its lessons home to oneself practically, nor realize that "Christ died for sinners, of whom I am the chief" (I. Tim. i. 15), is to ignore the most personal message ever sent from heaven to earth. If the deeds and words of Christ's last agony are not a Christian's practical guide, then is he a fool indeed.

It is not only that one's relation to the heavenly Father becomes more vividly real, that God is felt and touched, tasted and drunk, when we drain our Savior's bitter cup with Him on Calvary. But all human relationships become closer and infinitely holier; for the charity of Christ presses every love into its service and places itself at the service of every love. What deeper sympathy for an afflicted friend, what more disinterested affection for wife or child, than that which is drunk in by meditation on the death of the Son of God for His very enemies.

Our Holy One is dead. Upon the spot and at the moment of His death for my sins, it behooves me to protest once for all that sin shall no more have dominion over me. The Son of God died for me, this most affectionate and literally most self-sacrificing of friends—He died for my salvation. My salvation is henceforth my only real concern. Into Thy hands, O Jesus crucified, I commend my spirit, unreservedly and forever, to be owned and ruled by Thy Spirit in all things. Much may be said against me at the last accounting. It shall not be said that Thou didst die for me in vain.

CHAPTER III.

The Portents in Earth and Sky.

And there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour; and the sun was darkened. And behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent. And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had slept arose, and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection, came into the holy city and appeared to many (Matt. xxvii. 45, 51-53; Mark xv. 33, 38; Luke xxiii. 44, 45).

If God did not interrupt the crucifixion by His angels, yet he did interpose His power by various miraculous portents, more for men's edification than for His Son's relief. We have already meditated upon the darkening of the sun, for this took place the moment that Jesus was lifted into the air on His cross.

St. Chrysostom says that the marvelous occurrences during the crucifixion were not only the signs of the anger of God, but also tokens of the anguish of His dying Son. He turned them to good account. By their means He saved many desperate sinners whom He had failed to save, whether by the sight of His sufferings or the sound of His loving words. These, however, must have had a powerful influence over them, especially His last cry: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," so strong, so clear and so wonderfully tender in its accents of confidence in God. But the finishing touch was what these coarse natures required, signs of mastery

over the great elements of nature, exerted by One all full of tenderness for sinners—power and love were well mated on Calvary and won the victory at last; even over men who were little better than brutes.

A very significant portent was the rending of the veil of the temple. The ancient memorials of Israel's election were kept in a sanctuary of the temple, a place of thrice holy seclusion, divided from the ordinary place of sacrifice by a veil of precious material. This was woven of fine linen and silk, dyed with costly Tyrian purple and embroidered with scarlet and gold. Inside this veil none but the high priest ever entered, and he only once in the year and always alone, to offer the most solemn of the sacrifices prescribed by Moses. To "pass behind the veil" was an expression which meant to be secreted alone with the deity in the holy of holies for the most sacred of all religious offices. The instant that Jesus expired this veil "was rent in two, from the top, even to the bottom."

Christ upon the cross superseded this veiled sanctity, for He, the very Son of the living God, is now displayed to all nations most openly; the fulfilment of every sacred promise. And as Jesus crucified is the legislator of a divine law of love, the veil of the ancient law of fear is snatched away; the law of bondage is ended and the perfect law of holy liberty (James i. 25) is established in its stead forever.

Of old God had said, concerning the temple: "I have sanctified this house which thou hast built, to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart shall be there always" (III. Kings ix. 3). But now God's name is written on Calvary, high above His Son's head drooped

in holy death, and God's eyes and His heart are there and not in the temple. Calvary supplants the temple, and the cross its holy of holies. Nor is this for one particular place. For Calvary shall be multiplied in a countless number of altars, before which all races shall worship Jesus crucified, present behind the eucharistic veils.

The glory of the temple of Jerusalem has departed. The angels of the mercy seat are fled and gone, crying out as they go: "Let us depart from this place"; and they join the celestial spirits gathering about the soul of Jesus now being freed from the bonds of His mortal flesh. Their King will station them in due time to keep watch and ward about Him in His eucharistic sacrifice all round the world.

That afternoon, as the worshippers in the temple saw the veil suddenly rent in twain, and heard in the air the mysterious voices of the vanishing angels, they were amazed and confounded; and yet more so by feeling at the same instant the deep rumblings of an earthquake, which rocked the solid walls, and shocked their souls with dread. God is working terrible wonders in earth, in sky, and in His temple, they must have thought, and the visitation of His anger is upon us.

The Gospel narrative then tells of the bursting open of the tombs of many of the Hebrew saints, and their apparition in bodily form, after the resurrection, to numbers of the people in Jerusalem. Jesus had foretold this: "The hour cometh when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God" (John v. 25). That voice was His death cry on the cross.

When Jesus died He immediately visited the Limbus of the Hebrew saints, announced to them the salvation of

the world (I. Peter iii. 19), and bade them come forth from their repose and join the victorious soul of their Messias. These holy patriarchs, as the Lord's ancestors and brethren, outranked the angels themselves in His royal escort. The spirits of lawgivers and seers, priests and warriors of the ancient race are abroad in Israel; they visit the temple and say farewell to that holy shrine, now vacated of the divine presence.

So the disturbances in earth and sky and in the temple of God, and the opening of the graves of the just, witnessed to God's purpose in the crucifixion of Jesus. For we shall see later on that these marvels inspired fear in hearts not yet capable of the better feeling of love, and led them on finally to acknowledge and adore Jesus as the Son of God. Let us never despise the lower motives of religion, any more than our Redeemer did, who, though He craves men's love with an ardor all divine, yet does not disdain the homage born of even the most slavish terror, which He knows how to make the first step to true contrition, and from that to the most disinterested love.

CHAPTER IV.

"Indeed this was the Son of God."

And the centurion who stood over against Him, seeing that crying out in this manner He had given up the ghost, said: Indeed this Man was the Son of God. And they that were with him watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: Indeed this was a just Man, indeed this was the Son of God. And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts. And all His acquaintance, and the women that had followed Him from Galilee, ministering unto Him, stood afar off beholding these things; among whom was Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joseph, and Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him and ministered to Him, and many other women that came up with Him to Jerusalem (Matt. xxvii. 54-56; Mark xv. 39-41; Luke xxiii. 47-49).

The miraculous portents in earth and sky gained a sweeping victory, carrying over to Jesus the Roman soldiers and their officer, as well as the Jewish mob, "the whole multitude of them that were come together to that sight." The curious, heartless crowd of the city and the hard-natured men of the barracks were equally affected, changed and saved. They had all been against Him, and are now all for Him, and they do not hesitate to say so in the very words He puts into their hearts: "This Man was the Son of God."

How different they had been before this, blaspheming

Jesus openly and mocking Him ; how different from Mary and John, "and all His acquaintance," the women from Galilee. And now they are the same—one and all they believe in Jesus and openly proclaim His divine Sonship ; and with sincere regret for their previous unbelief, aye, and for their fearful words and more fearful deeds against Him, they beat their breasts with all humility. This is one of the most instructive happenings of Calvary.

It was a saying of an ancient father of the desert : "If thou hast a heart, thou canst be saved." Even these off-scourings of the human race had hearts, and so they were brought to fear and love Jesus crucified. Nor let us say that this was altogether a victory of fear ; for fear only began what nobler motives carried forward and ended. We may also believe that in some of them it was the moving sight of Christ on the cross that made even the quaking earth and the darkening sky effectual to change them. And first and last it was towards Jesus, dying and dead for His enemies, that their thoughts of whatever kind were directed, not towards the invisible majesty whose power the portents revealed. They did not say : The Almighty Lord of heaven and earth is angry, but rather : This Man who has just died, praying for His enemies, is no other than the Son of God.

It is always a question how to treat those who have injured us grossly, or even grievously injured God's honor, especially if they are bent on doing further and greater mischief. St. Peter points to Calvary for an answer : "For unto this you are called ; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow His steps" (I. Pet. ii. 21). Good souls usu-

ally pray privately for their depraved acquaintances, but externally avoid them and escape their company. Christ's way is different. "Rise up, let us go hence, he is at hand that will betray Me"; and then He went from innocent company into the thick of the most wicked company on earth, went to meet Judas and his band; and He gave Himself up to them. Kings go to meet their enemies, armed with deadly weapons to kill and capture them. Our King—let it never be forgotten—goes to meet His enemies and lays down his arms to them, laying aside even words of admonition as He reaches the very crisis of His battle, speaking only those of forgiveness—our King and our model. The Apostles would strike with the sword, and their Master immediately disarms them. He expressly declines the help of resistless angels, preferring ten thousand pangs of suffering to legions of warlike spirits. He will die for His enemies, and He will prefer that to every possible way of dealing with them. And He wins the battle that way: "And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts."

The centurion's case is one of particular interest. "He was an uncircumcised pagan," says St. Bernard, "and yet by these tokens he recognized in Jesus the Lord of majesty." He was probably an observant man and naturally of a religious disposition. He knew something of Jesus' claims as spiritual teacher and guide of the Jews; and it is very likely that he had been present, serving under the tribune, at the arrest the night before. When the larger force was dismissed he was left in command of the smaller one, detailed for the dreadful work on Calvary. It is quite probable, too, that he had been present during the

trial at Caiaphas' house and then had gone to his quarters and slept during the rest of the night, returning to his post at Pilate's court early in the forenoon, when he was charged with the crucifixion of the three malefactors.

Gradually he had become deeply impressed with his prisoner, Jesus; a man so meek and calm, so dignified under mocking and insult, and yet so forgiving; saying indeed little but wonderful in every word—gradually it had grown upon him that Jesus' claim to be the Son of the living and true God was more than imposture, more than fanaticism. The three hours' agony completed the change in his thoughts. He was near Jesus; he was under His affectionate glances; he may have done our Savior's mother some favors; the words from the cross were enough to move any heart. What soul, but that of Annas or of Caiaphas, could see and hear all that occurred on Calvary and not be moved? At last he sees Jesus die, and feels the interior touch of His liberated spirit melting him into entire recognition—this is the Son of God!

The Son of God! "Of a truth this man was the Son of God!" And he felt the very earth trembling beneath him as a fit accompaniment of his act of lowly worship.

The Gentiles sought and found Jesus as He was born and adored him; nor did the indifference of the Jews or the treachery of Herod hinder them; neither was the sad poverty of the stable of Bethlehem a scandal to them. And now, neither the hatred of the Jews nor the scandal of the cross can hinder this soldier, this type of Gentile Rome, from crying out from a full heart: "This Man was the Son of God!"

The centurion's soldiers did the same—a greater marvel yet. They were a mere rabble, hardened by relentless

force into military discipline, the nameless sons of the idolatrous populations of the vast empire, men whose very trade was cruelty. Even these were converted and confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. Three hours before this they had scourged Him to the bone and crowned Him with thorns, and now they would suffer death rather than lay a finger on His very corpse. He had gradually softened even their dull minds until they began to see in Him something divine—so patient, so forgiving. In Pilate's hall they had bent the knee before Him in mockery, and now, as the earthquake shock appals them, they beat their breasts in all sincerity, gazing devoutly upon His lifeless form. Living, they executed Him; dying, they adored Him; "the earthquake and the things that were done," moving their souls with fear, the sight of Jesus' corpse softening their hearts with compassion and with contrition.

Nor were these all who were given to Jesus as the first fruits of His death: "And all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts." They were the same "whole multitude" who, that forenoon, had unanimously voted for Barabbas in preference to Christ, yielding to the artful words or the bullying threats of the chief priests. They had cried out: "Crucify Him!" And they had taken that other dreadful word from their masters and had shouted: "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" And now that His blood is shed they worship it—He is their King and their God.

O wondrous power of a holy death, power for reconciliation, for pardon, peace and love. O what in all life is so precious as the privilege to bow down one's head.

and die for sinners. Jesus bowed his head to our foe, death, and gave up His life to him. Here then death gained dominion over Him. But instantly the dread spectre was revealed as the bearer of an infinite favor, both to Jesus and His enemies. At His death and not before, the callous hirelings who had executed Him began to beat their breasts and adore Him; and as to the hard-hearted Jews—the Ecce Homo had enraged them, the Christus Mortuus melts them; it moves them with pity and inspires them with faith, even His very corpse.

All this is matter of serious reflection for us, each of whom is not only saved by our Lord's death, but each in his place and measure must bear His message to others for their salvation. "We preach Christ crucified," exclaims the Apostle (I. Cor. i. 23); which means that our words are like His death in their effects, making sinful men beat their breasts and adore the Son of God in all humility and contrition.

Now, from among all His doctrines, He chose a certain one as the best fitted for his sermon from the cross. It is that of God's mercy for sinners. And so should we, in dealing with sinners, select mercy rather than justice for our theme. If the disciple preaches rigor it is small compliment to his crucified Master who preached pardon. And from among all possible actions calculated to win souls, He chose dying for them as the most likely to succeed. And there He hangs dead on the cross, His pattern for our dealings with sinners, just as His sermon on the cross is His model for our words to them.

Lord, grant that I may die a happy death. And may I not only die in Thy friendship (O horror! to think of dying Thy enemy!) but, in my last agony, may my spirit

be strengthened by Thy priest and Thy sacraments; may I die with loving friends around my bed, my associates and my models in Thy service. And yet, O Lord, how differently didst Thou die. Those whom Thou lovest best were, indeed, near Thee, Thy mother and Thy favorite disciple, but only those two and a few faithful women of Thy acquaintance from Thy home in Galilee. Thou didst choose to die amid Thy triumphant enemies and the brutal soldiers, their servants, so that Thou mightest save, even at Thy death and by its very stroke, those whom Thou couldst not save in life. Might I aspire to do the same? Might I ask Thee that, through the merits of Thy last pangs, my final sorrows may avail to save those whom I have failed to save by my efforts in life?—perhaps even by my faulty way of teaching them the lessons of Calvary.

CHAPTER V.

The Side of Jesus is Opened with a Lance.

Then the Jews (because it was the parasceve), that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for that was a great Sabbath day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with Him. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs, but one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he that saw it hath given testimony, and his testimony is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that you also may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture might be fulfilled: You shall not break a bone of Him. And again another Scripture saith: They shall look on Him whom they pierced (John xix. 31-37).

Mary, John, the Magdalen, and the other faithful women were presently left alone with Jesus as He hung dead on the cross. It would seem that all others went away soon after He died. Our Redeemer's mother and her friends, doubtless, began to counsel anxiously together as to how they could take Him down and bury Him. They were shortly interrupted by the arrival of a party of soldiers from the city. These were not the ones who had crucified Jesus, for they had been converted and had returned to the city; but another band was sent by Pilate at the request of the Jews. They were ordered to break the legs of Jesus and of the two thieves, put them then

to death and remove their bodies, so that the sight of them and their cries of agony might not pollute the great passover Sabbath, which begun at sundown that evening. They immediately broke the thieves' legs and dispatched them, took them down and carried them away with them. Jesus they found already dead, and, unlike the other crucified, His body was affectionately watched by a group of friends. In their care the soldiers left it, being assured that they would see to its removal. But before the party of soldiers went away, one of them made sure that Jesus was dead by piercing His corpse with his spear.

Usually malefactors were left to die from the crucifixion alone, which might be only after many hours of agony. But the Pharisees and chief priests did not allow things to take their usual course in this case. Their zeal for Sabbath observance was one reason; another was in order to be made certain that their victim was dead. Break His legs, they must have said to the soldiers, and stab Him to the heart; then fling the carrion corpse to the dogs; away with Him, out of our sight.

He was an offensive object to them. After they had seen Him writhing helplessly on the cross, and knew that a vast multitude had seen Him, their next care was to efface His memory from all minds, including their own, little supposing that His death would forever fill the whole race of mankind with the most peremptory questionings.

The soldier who pierced him, thinking that perhaps he was not quite dead and might be only in a swoon, struck Him hard; his work was well and effectually done. The wound was large enough to hold a man's hand, for the Lord said to Thomas after His resurrection: "Bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side" (John xx. 27).

Thus did the Jews show reverence for their feast of the paschal lamb, by piercing to the heart and thrusting out of their sight the divine archetype of that same symbol, namely the Lamb of God Himself, slain for their sins.

Jesus was spared the sickening sight of the breaking of the thieves' legs and the other dreadful scenes of their last moments—His eyes were dark in death, His soul was ranging free in the Limbus of the just, He was already beginning His life of eternal triumph. His seed time of tears and blood, of dreadful sights and heart-rending sounds, was done and over forever, His harvest of joy begun.

But the Jews, besides their eagerness to remove our Lord's corpse from the city's gate during the passover, were also uneasy about His prophecy of rising again from the dead. This was another reason to make doubly sure of His death. The sudden descent of darkness at mid-day, the earthquake, the startling news of the rending of the veil of the temple, the rumors of the opening of the tombs of their ancient saints, although not enough to convert them, were yet more than enough to alarm them; and so they were hot and eager to be done with Jesus, finally and forever.

But we must not too readily dismiss from our meditation the purpose of the Jews to purify their city by cleansing it of the body of Jesus. For certainly such a sight as these three malefactors writhing in their death agonies at the gate of the holy city, their bodies smeared with blood, the air filled with their screams and their blasphemies, affrighting the worshippers passing to and from the temple, would indeed desecrate the sanctity of the greatest Sabbath of the year.

But how is it now? Now, on every day that is sacred to God and to His people, it is this very same spectacle that draws together all the civilized races of mankind. They assemble about the crucified Redeemer to worship Him and His Father and His Holy Spirit, to pray for the living and the dead, to forgive one another's injuries, to pour out peace offerings and thank offerings. In order to show forth and perpetuate every detail of this event, so disgusting to the Jews, the Lord instituted the Eucharist, the foremost public rite of His religion, not only representing, but actually reproducing His crucifixion, in which He continues to immolate Himself in a most miraculous manner and most joyously, and then rises again triumphantly into our daily lives. What profaned the Jewish Sabbath sanctifies the Christian Sabbath and adorns every Christian temple with heavenly attractions. How wonderful a power has death when offered for God's honor and our brothers' welfare.

Giving Jesus His fifth wound was a providence as blessed as it was singular. Nothing in the whole marvelous narrative touches Christians more keenly than this stabbing of the corpse of Jesus. It made His great wound the deepest, clean to the heart, wide as a man's hand, made certainly by a heavy thrust that pushed and swayed corpse and cross as the spear was driven home. It was right that His great wound should be reserved for His heart, the organ of His great virtue, love.

It was His last wound. "It is finished," had Jesus murmured when He had tasted the vinegar, whose very bitterness was embittered by insult. It is finished, may have said the hard-natured soldier, as his arm, nerved by the hate of the Jews, drove their murder into the Re-

deemer's dead heart—I have finished Him, I have made sure of Him.

After that stroke no hand touched Jesus but in love. And that wound in the still heart of Jesus did Him no hurt, but hurt only His mother, who covered her face as she saw the soldier draw back and poise his weapon; and she thanked God her Son was dead. And then at second thought, she thanked the heavenly Father for this most eloquent of the five witnesses of her Son's love for men.

Note well that Jesus suffered in all his bodily frame, and, for special purposes of love, in each one of them—His hands are pierced that His precious blood may bedew their generous gifts to us; His feet are pierced, that blood may mark His tracks as He searches zealously for our souls; His brain is tortured by a thorny crown that His thoughts may trickle blood as they ache and throb for us; and now the heart, the very organ of love, receives the deepest cut of all, and is drained dry of its tears and its blood, so generously poured out at every step of His atonement for our sins.

To permit this wound was as if an afterthought of our Redeemer. He would say to Himself: What! canst Thou not suffer something for Thy beloved after Thou art dead? And He answers: I can; My heart, though dead, remains as yet untouched, and it is within reach of their hate; let it receive love's last wound. My mother, too, and her company, are yet on Calvary, they shall stand for my living self and bear the very pain that I should bear were I still alive and had been struck this mortal blow.

All men recognize a deeper depth of hate, if a triumphant foe spurns the dead body of his slain enemy, and

then stabs it. Our Redeemer could not forego the privilege of this indignity. As if to say: After My heart is pulseless and dead, it has yet a tribute of love to offer—what I could not give my enemies and live, namely, my heart's blood, I will give for their salvation after I am dead.

It is thus the overflowing of the measure of His goodness, that the blood that was left when life was gone should yet be sought and shed by His enemies, and should be offered up by His blissful soul and His most sorrowful mother for our redemption. Jesus, already dead, dishonored and disfigured, is now a corpse, drained dry and bloodless for love of us.

We know that the five great wounds of Jesus have never closed, as is plain from the account of His apparitions after His resurrection.

In heaven this day Jesus feels Himself all the more our Redeemer for the deep wound He can show in His very heart. And we can lift a more grateful voice of love as we cry: Thanks be to God for the wounded heart of Jesus.

It was an afterwound. And what is all the work of Christ with sinners but an afterwound of hearts? If He can but put a touch of pain in a sinner's heart after he has sinned, He has won it. And as to His choicest friends—what is His completed and after-work with them but to cut them to their hearts' core with sympathetic love, both for Himself in His passion and for sinners for whose sake He died?

Meditation on this fifth wound, therefore, has always had a powerful effect upon our Redeemer's followers. St. Augustine voices the ancient church, giving us the

symbolical and truest interpretation: "The evangelist carefully chose his words when he said, not that the soldier struck, or wounded, but that he opened the side of Christ; that the door of life might thus, as it were, be opened, from whence the sacraments of the Church flowed forth, without which there is no entrance to true life." And the Church herself says in her hymns that she was born like a new Eve from the opened side of our new Adam.

Providence in these later days has led Christians to adore that stricken heart with special fervor, and in the devotion of the Sacred Heart has given us a powerful help in our worship of the supreme love of Jesus, especially as shown us in the holy Eucharist.

And this is kindred to our best feelings. For what do we say of bad men? That they are hard hearted, proud hearted, sensual hearted, cruel hearted. And of Him on our altars? Tender hearted, meek and humble hearted, pure hearted. The Sacred Heart devotion has offered the Eucharistic Christ a new tribute of sympathy and of loyalty, increasing by many millions the fervent throng of souls gathered about His heart's dearest shrine in holy Mass, and at His generous banquet table in holy communion.

CHAPTER VI.

Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross.

And after these things, when evening was now come, there came a certain rich man of Arimathea, a city of Judea, named Joseph, who was a councillor, a good and just man (the same had not consented to their counsel and doings); who also himself looked for the Kingdom of God. This man came and went in boldly to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus (because he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews). But Pilate wondered that He should be already dead; and sending for the centurion, he asked him if He were already dead. And when he understood it by the centurion, Pilate commanded that the body should be delivered to Joseph. He came, therefore, and Nicodemus also came, he who at first came to Jesus by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. And Joseph, bringing fine linen, and taking Him down, wrapped Him up in the fine linen, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury (Matt. xxvii. 57-59; Mark xv. 42-46; Luke xxiii. 50-53; John xix. 38-40).

The soldier who pierced the side of Jesus did the last offense against His body. From that moment it was to be treated with the most affectionate reverence. Living it was covered with spittle and beaten in the face, scourged and crowned with thorns, and after it was dead it was stabbed to the heart. Now His mother's tears are its sacred ointment, and none but loving hands shall ever touch it again. God has barred off from it all further indignity.

Our Redeemer's dead body remained about three

hours on the cross before being taken down, He having died about three o'clock; and only "when evening had come" did Joseph of Arimathea petition Pilate for leave to bury Him. Meantime the perplexity of Mary and her friends was no doubt extreme, the little company being gathered about the cross, waiting for they knew not what. Joseph may have been with them before going to Pilate, in which case their trouble of mind would be lessened, and, on his return to them from Pilate, entirely relieved. He sought the governor's permission to bury our Redeemer because of his love for Him, and also as a safeguard against the interference of the Jews, who might have wished to dispose of the body themselves, with what intention and in what manner we can easily imagine.

Joseph was the first Jew of any kind who spoke to Pilate on behalf of Jesus; and he, alas, only after Jesus was dead. Pilate must have said to him: Where were you this morning at the trial? Why did you not assemble this innocent Man's friends and speak out for Him in my court? If I had had your countenance and help I could have saved Jesus. You are a noble councillor indeed. You are bold enough to bury the dead; where was your boldness to save the living?

How strange a condition. On that awful day of cowardice high praise is given to Peter because he did not despair—after his perjured denial of his Master; Pilate is commended that he clung obstinately to the title he wrote for the cross—although he had basely delivered Jesus to the fury of His enemies; and Joseph of Arimathea is lauded for his boldness—he dared ask leave to bury His corpse. The only really bold friends of Jesus were weeping women.

Pilate would not believe Joseph's report that Jesus was already dead, for he had but just given the chief priests leave to kill Him by breaking His legs. He, therefore, sent for the centurion, and as this officer reported that he had seen Jesus die, Pilate "commanded that the body should be delivered to Joseph."

Thus it happened that it was not given to His mother, who yielded willingly to the dispositions of Providence. Nor to His Apostles; they were not rich men nor councillors, too poor and obscure to approach the governor, and having no heart anyway to ask so perilous a favor. But Joseph and Nicodemus were members of the high council of Israel. And now that the death of Christ had expelled the fear of the Jews from their hearts, their name and office and wealth shall serve His mortal remains and His mother's love in the last sad offices of friendship.

Anxious and hurried, Joseph must have gone to the governor soon after the chief priests had been there, they to beg the quick killing of Jesus, and he, knowing He was already dead, to ask the custody of the sacred body—boldly, too, and doubtless in their sight. And so it happens that Joseph and Nicodemus are to be forever honored as favored assistants to her who was our chief mourner at the funeral of the Redeemer of our souls.

Joseph, obtaining Pilate's permission, hastened out to Calvary, bringing with him the tools needed for drawing the nails, a ladder for reaching the arms of the cross and a supply of "fine linen" for enshrouding the corpse. As to Nicodemus, we know not exactly when he joined Joseph; perhaps he went to Pilate with him. Nicodemus, on his part, bought a hundred-pound weight of drugs for the embalmment.

With these two men was associated the beloved disciple John in the work of loosening and lowering the body, not without the eager help of Mary and the other women. It was no easy matter; it must have taken all their strength and consumed some time to detach and lower the body, anxiously watching, meanwhile, the slowly sinking sun. Imagine the difficulty of loosening those large, rough, deep-driven nails, at the same time supporting the corpse and hindering its falling headlong to the ground.

And consider how their souls were overflowing all the time with unspeakable reverence. Their piety, as we cannot help believing, was deeply shocked by not only their close contact with His many wounds, but by finding, when the nails were drawn, that the corpse adhered—as it must have done—to the wood of the cross. His blood had almost glued Him to that symbol of His love, to which His soul had adhered yet more closely in life by His purpose to save us by His crucifixion: “To reconcile all things unto Himself, making peace through the blood of His cross” (Col. i. 20), says the Apostle.

At last it is lowered down—that poor body, wrenched and distorted and limp, pale as wax, but mostly marked with blots and streaks of blood. From that face there was now no responsive look, as they gathered about it and hung over it—Jesus is lying there naked, blood-smeared, cold, dead. And what man or woman there, always excepting Mary, but was transported with inconsolable grief as Jesus was taken down from the cross? They must have rent the air with their wailings and their sobs—all but His mother, who, though deeply suffering, was yet self-possessed, because she was His mother, and because she alone enjoyed clear faith in His resurrection.

Mary's sorrow was different from that of the others. O how beautiful was that corpse to her, its glorious wounds, the royal purple of its blood; and how sweet its fragrance as she kissed it over and over again. And how much sweeter yet she knew those graces to be that pour out of every wound and bruise into the lives of all mankind—fragrant of eternal paradise, "an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness" (Eph. v. 2).

And yet she, too, had her full share of suffering. For how sharp a pain was hers as she received the body into her arms and upon her lap, her dead Son, and dead with such cruel marks of torment. She gratified her aching heart by looking more closely at those five awful wounds, which had pierced her inmost soul as she saw them inflicted on Him—the great rent in His side, still dripping blood and water, each hand and each foot dug through with a ragged wound. How sorrowfully she kissed each one of them; how devoutly she adored that divine body, so truly God's Son's, so truly her Son's. She offers it with entire unity of purpose with her Son to the eternal Father, for the sins of the race whose curse He so generously had borne upon the tree (Gal. iii. 13).

We can but faintly imagine her feelings and we know not what words she said, if indeed she said aught but voiceless words to God and to the spirit of her Son. She had given Him up to the world, the most beautiful of the sons of men; and now the world returns Him to her with a beauty yet more exalted, indeed, but most unspeakably sad. She had seen His form only the night before full of all grace and dignity; He now rests on her bosom a dead corpse, smeared with His own blood, showing all the work of hate and avarice, cowardice and treachery.

Yet, with all her sighs of pain, an occasional sigh of relief is mingled—"It is finished," I feel His soul's peaceful serenity deep within my own. For may we not suppose that the soul of her Son, liberated from its broken body, began its mission of peace by inspiring Mary with a foretaste of the resurrection, at least at intervals, and in the higher regions of her consciousness? He could hardly fail to communicate to her some part of the glory that now entranced His spirit; some gleams of light must have pierced her darkness.

Yet we must remember that, whatever her spirit knew, Mary's eyes and hands and lips and bosom were enthralled by this awful wreck of her Son, embracing it with a mother's tenderness while she mourned over it with a mother's grief. And she would have the whole world know and share her grief. She would, especially, have passed her Son's body around the next day from house to house through all Israel; for this was the divine paschal lamb, whose feeble emblem they venerated in their solemnity.

Never was Mary so beautiful as while bending over her Son's corpse and then embracing it, jewelling her garments and her lips and brow with the dark spots of His blood. "I am black but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem" (Cant. i. 4), she might exclaim, adorned as she was with the sorrowful insignia of our race's queen.

Such, then, was Mary's part in the last scenes on Calvary. Calmly had she assisted in taking Him down from the cross, says the devout Baronius, and then, "washing His wounds with her tears, folding His corpse in her arms, and saying at last with a calm voice: O Lord, the mystery ordained for Thee before all ages has come at

length. And on giving the linen to Joseph, she said: It will now be thy duty to bury Him honorably in this, to perfume Him with myrrh, and to perform for Him all rightful observances."

For the funeral must begin; time pressed, the Sabbath hour of sunset was very near. Mary's associates, dreading the return of the soldiers, or of the servants of the chief priests, must have entreated her to allow them to prepare the body for the grave.

We owe Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus an additional word of praise and congratulation. Their emancipation from human respect was one of the first effects of the death of Jesus. His soul acted directly upon theirs; His purely spiritual influence was more potent than His bodily presence and his spoken word had been: Jesus dead is more eloquent than Jesus living. And even to this day no victory of the cross is more noble than to change a cowardly Christian into a fearless one.

Joseph and Nicodemus, from sneaking caitiffs, immediately became brave friends of a fallen chief. As His foes of all orders began at once, on Jesus' death, to say: "This Man was the Son of God," so the two timid councillors advance to the front like heroes, expose themselves calmly to the wrath of the chief priests and boldly obtain possession of the Lord's body. And they bury Him not as a criminal, but as a great and wonderful prophet. Jesus at His death instantly converted His enemies into friends; and he presently proceeds to transform his lukewarm friends into His open defenders. They had been afraid of the chief priests, of Pilate, of the mob, of their fellow councillors; now they are afraid of no one but God—afraid only of being cowards. They had never dreamed

of approaching Jesus in His lifetime, except "secretly, for fear of the Jews"; now that He is dead they are the most prominent mourners at His funeral. Least of all had they ever invited Him to their houses. Now, says Joseph, I will give Him the Hebrew's most sacred home, my very sepulchre—it is to be His and His alone; and His memory is forever embalmed in my heart's dearest affections. This very forenoon, if you but pointed your finger at me, I wilted with terror, and now I defy your fiercest hate. I am for Jesus of Nazareth, publicly and privately, now and forevermore. I will be crucified myself for Him. I will stand against you and the whole world for Him and for His teaching. I am rich—take all my money; I am high in office—degrade me and turn me out of the synagogue. I am for Jesus crucified, at all hazards and at every expense. Thus is the cross of Jesus crucified the nursery of heroes.

Prayer of Ludolph the Saxon: "O Jesus, who didst choose not to come down from the cross living, but to be taken down from it dead, for the instruction of the elect, grant that I may worthily receive Thy true body from Thy sacred altar as if from the altar of the cross. And grant that so long as I live, I may not come down from this cross, to which I have been affixed in the profession of Thy service, except when it shall please Thee to require from this body the soul which Thou hast given me. Then only, and at Thy call, may I be taken down from the cross, and at Thy invitation be brought to the repose of paradise. Amen."

CHAPTER VII.

The Burial of Jesus.

[Joseph] came therefore, and Nicodemus also came, he who at first came to Jesus by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. And Joseph bringing fine linen, and taking Him down, wrapped Him up in fine linen, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now there was in the place where He was crucified, a garden; and Joseph, taking the body, laid it in his own new monument, which he had hewed out in a rock in the garden—a new sepulchre, wherein no man yet had been laid. And he rolled a great stone to the door of the monument, and went his way. And it was the day of the Parasceve, and the Sabbath drew on. There, therefore, because of the Parasceve of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the sepulchre was nigh at hand (Matt. xxvii. 59, 60; Mark xv. 46; Luke xxiii. 53, 54; John xix. 39-42).

Why did not the chief priests demand the body of Jesus themselves, and make away with it as suited their animosity? Some remnant of fear of His miraculous powers hindered them. Or they thought: What difference does it make? The guard has returned and reports Him dead; a Roman soldier knows a dead man when he sees one—his spear can find the vital spot in his victim. And so they left the door open for Joseph's holy zeal.

Were it not for Joseph, the mother of Jesus would have had no way of burying her Son's corpse. Nor was his generosity stinted; it was no ordinary interment he would give Jesus, but all the embalming that time would allow; and no other resting place than his own sepulchre.

He sincerely thanked Providence for guiding him, but lately to prepare it for his own burial.

It was an unspeakable privilege to him to lay that holy body, that dearest treasure that all earth contained, "in his own new monument, a new sepulchre, in which no man had yet been laid." And Nicodemus felt profoundly honored by the privilege of helping Joseph, and of spending a great sum of money for a hundredweight of spices for the embalmment; and both of these men must have wept with emotion to receive the heartfelt thanks of Mary as, with the aid of John, they set about their task of entombing her Son.

It was a hurried funeral, "because of the Parasceve of the Jews." The Hebrew Sabbath seemed to haunt our Savior, even after His death. It had been a serious cause of His persecution during life, and now it hurried His body into its grave. It was, as we have seen, the great festival recalling the paschal lamb slain at the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage and given by God as a type of Jesus. The Jews clung to this paschal lamb as against the Lamb of God. To them the external memorials of their ancient glories had become the beginning and end of their religion, and their great Sabbath day crowded and hurried their very Redeemer into His grave. O God, teach us always to value the types of things divine for the sake of the divine realities and not for their own sakes.

The embalming of the sacred body and all the other devout offices of the burial were, most probably, done in and about the tomb itself. This was a small chamber excavated in the rocky hillside. It was about fifty paces distant from the spot of the crucifixion. Joseph, Nicode-

mus and the Apostle John placed the body upon the folds of the linen and carried it to the tomb, the women following on with reverent steps, Mary at their head. Arriving at the entrance of the tomb they laid their precious burden down in front of it; water was then procured, and, while the women stood apart, the men washed our Redeemer's body. They washed it clean of all the clotted blood, the stains of the spittle and of the dust of the road into which he had fallen on the way of the cross. And while they worked they noted again and again with aching hearts every wound of the scourges, all the bruises from blows and kicks, the wounds in the hands and feet, the great opening in the side. They finally folded His limbs into their proper position and arranged His sacred hair and beard smoothly and becomingly.

O how enviable a task was theirs. Who does not wish to have shared it, and to have ministered the last rites to that body in company with these three favored men, pouring on water, wiping with towels, adjusting the limbs, counting the wounds, all done upon Jesus crucified, with many tears of affection, sighs of painful sympathy, offerings of heartfelt love.

Next the winding sheet of fine linen was laid upon the floor of the tomb, and over it were spread the embalming spices. Upon them the body was laid, more spices again were spread over it, and then the linen was wrapped fold upon fold around the whole corpse, excepting the head. Now the women were called to bid farewell to their Master before the face was covered.

First comes Mary. As she kisses His lips, her mother's tears fall fast, and, with all her perfect faith in His resurrection, her soul is unspeakably sad. Her

tears are His most fitting balm. Now Magdalen pays her farewell to her beloved Master, who had not disdained her penitent tears, nor her loving anointing when all men loathed and despised her except Jesus Himself, and derided Him for His mercy to the "woman that was a sinner." At last all the others look and say their farewell to Jesus, most lovingly and most sadly. Yet these women are not content; they have agreed among themselves that this hasty and imperfect embalmment shall not be the final one. They purpose to return when the Sabbath is over and anoint and embalm Jesus over again and more perfectly, and to do it themselves; and they shall be rewarded for this by the first sight of His risen glory.

When all have taken their last look at the dead form of Jesus, and dropped their tears upon His face, His head is wrapped around with a napkin containing a layer of spices. Then the men manage, doubtless with some difficulty to roll the great stone across the low entrance of the sepulchre. There then is Jesus enclosed in the dark vault of the dead—Jesus is buried.

They all stood there for a while in the deepening twilight, silent and awestruck. Perhaps Joseph then intoned a Psalm of David, might it not have been our own familiar *De Profundis*, our own sigh of mingled sorrow and hope at the grave of our beloved dead?

Mary, the three men, and most of the women immediately returned into the city. Magdalen, however, and Mary, the cousin of Jesus' mother, lingered near for a further while, reluctant to withdraw. Soon these are dismissed by the guard sent out by Pilate to watch the tomb.

And what of Jesus' oft-repeated prophecy of His

resurrection? If Joseph of Arimathea had positively believed it, had understood it, not as a mystical, figurative prophecy, but as a prediction of a real resuscitation of the dead body, he would have taken the corpse into the city and watched with it till life returned. There is little doubt but that neither he nor any of the others had any expectation of a real resurrection, except Mary alone. She held her heart true to her Son's actual return to life, for her divine motherhood made her the depositary of the Redeemer's promises, known and understood by her in their fullest meaning.

But this burial of Jesus, being in all respects that of a man dead and gone like any other dead man, was to be of essential importance in the preaching of the Gospel, whose truth rests upon the reality of Jesus returning back to perfect bodily life. The corpse, the embalmment, the tomb, the great stone; and afterwards the Roman guard, the seal, the lapse of the silent hours from Friday till Sunday—all this ministered those proofs of His resurrection, which were antecedently necessary. They made a perfect chain of evidence when the empty tomb was shown, and the many witnesses had seen the selfsame Jesus alive, His identical wounds all shining with immortal glory.

And Providence had provided a new tomb for the burial of Jesus, lest it might be pretended that the subsequent apparitions of the risen Lord were of some other person buried there before Him. The burial of the Redeemer thus intervenes between His death and resurrection as the link inseparably binding together those two great events. Hence our Christian creeds say not only that Jesus was dead, but "dead and buried," before af-

firming our faith that "the third day he rose again." The narrative of the burial locates the dead body and names the men and women who saw it and handled it and cared for it, embalmed it, and finally placed it in the grave and enclosed it there with a great stone.

We cannot help noticing in the burial of Jesus His persistent love of the virtue of poverty. Not a stitch of His own clothes is placed on His corpse. The shroud that enwraps Him and the spices that embalm Him are provided not by His own foresight, or at His mother's expense or that of His Apostles'; but they are the spontaneous gift of men almost strangers to Him; and His last resting place is the same. In His death and His burial, as in all His life, His preference was to be beholden to the charity of others, even in things the most personal and sacred.

"He who had no home of His own when alive, has no tomb of His own when dead," says an ancient Father of the Church, "but is laid in another man's grave, and being naked is clothed by Joseph." After this who that is a Christian will grudge a poor man a night's shelter, or grumble to help a poor bereaved family decently to bury their beloved dead?

So Joseph "rolled a great stone to the door of the monument and went his way." He felt as if a great stone were pressing down his own very heart as he returned to his home, distressed, pondering the future, hoping and yet dreading. But he deeply felt the honor that had been his—that to him of all the race of Israel had been given the privilege of burying Jesus, the Messias. And Joseph, in this holy office, began that loving care for the divine body which has soothed so many eucharistic souls all

these succeeding ages, in building churches and altars and in adorning them as the resting place of the risen Lord, really present among us. For as we meditate on the burial of Jesus, we cannot help thinking of Him in our tabernacle. I wish that I had half the reverence for Jesus living and enthroned on my altar that Joseph had for Jesus dead and buried in his own monument. I pray that, when in my communions I embalm Him in my affections and introduce Him into the innermost chamber of my soul, I may feel for the glorious King of men and angels the heartfelt love that Joseph and his associates felt for the broken and wounded form that they enclosed in the tomb.

St. Paul teaches his converts that by Baptism they are buried with Christ (Coll. ii. 12), to rise again by the operation of His grace into the beginnings of a new life. But the sacrament of the Eucharist, is our yet more immediate connection with the buried Savior. For as they embalmed that form, they honored a body which is itself the balm that shall preserve the bodies of the elect sweet and pure for all eternity by its eucharistic life: "The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John vi. 52, 55). For as His soul descended into Limbo, Jesus was affectionately mindful of His body in Joseph's tomb. And now that Christ, soul and body being forever united, is risen, ascended on high and reigns in heaven, He is yet present with us on our altars, body and blood, soul and divinity, dispensing to our souls all the graces of Calvary, anointing our mortal bodies with the balm of everlasting life.

CHAPTER VIII.

Watching the Sepulchre.

And Mary Magdalen and Mary the mother of Joseph, sitting over against the sepulchre, beheld where He was laid. And the [other] women that were come with Him from Galilee, following after, saw the sepulchre, and how His body was laid; and returning, they prepared spices and ointments; and on the Sabbath day they rested according to the commandment. And the next day, which followed the day of preparation, the chief priests of the Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying: Sir, we have remembered that that seducer said, while He was yet alive: After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day; lest perhaps His disciples come and steal Him away, and say to the people: He is risen from the dead; and the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said to them: You have a guard; go, and guard it as you know. And they departing, made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting guards (Matt. xxvii. 61-66; Mark xv. 47; Luke xxiii. 55, 56).

Our devout steps have brought us to the end of our journey. Jesus is crucified, is dead and buried. Let us, for our final meditation, consider the watch set over His holy grave by both friends and foes, begging the grace of ardent sympathy for His death and of certain hope in His resurrection, together with affectionate veneration for His body and the grave in which it rests.

That body was the masterpiece of God's wisdom and

power among earthly creatures. It was fashioned by the Holy Spirit out of Mary's virginal substance, it was made the instrument of holy suffering for all our sins, and at the same time of vindication of the injured majesty of God. The body of Jesus was a fit companion for His soul, and He loved it dearly, all the more dearly during His passion, most especially when dead and buried. And His soul, descending into Limbo's happy shades, or soaring aloft to the Father's heavenly welcome, had but one element lacking to its complete beatitude—if it is lawful to say so—union with its body, a body restored to its former integrity and with the added glory of its sacred wounds.

Joseph and Nicodemus went their way in sorrow after the funeral and burial of Jesus. The sorrowful mother, as night draws on, is admonished by St. John of approaching darkness and that they must return to the city. She kneels before her Son's tomb, and kisses the stone that encloses Him; she then rises, and, with John and the greater number of the women, takes her journey into Jerusalem. Magdalen and another, perhaps several others, "sitting over against the sepulchre," still lingered there, mournfully looking at the place of His repose. We know that they intended to return the day after the morrow to give the body a better anointing and embalming, Magdalen especially feeling that she was entitled to a foremost part in that devout office. These were our Savior's first watchers. And many angels were their fellow-watchers around His grave, silent and invisible guardians if His divine remains.

Roman soldiers presently intruded their unwelcome

presence. An official of the temple approached, or perhaps even one of the chief priests, leading back the guard that had broken the legs of the thieves and pierced the side of Jesus that afternoon. They quickly placed their sentinels and then hurried the women away; and the darkness of night fell upon the scene.

The chief priests had procured the guard from the governor. At first they had seemed to care little about the disposal of the body of their victim—He was dead, that was enough; and they did not interfere with the burial. Their joy at His death was like the delirium of madmen, as had been their rage against Him while living. But their joy was dashed by the disturbances in the sky and earth, by the mysterious rending of the veil of the temple, and the sudden repentance of many of their friends. Then came the open profession of faith in Jesus by the Roman centurion, the boldness of Joseph and Nicodemus, members of their council and finally the honorable interment they learned that Jesus was going to receive. He was worse than carrion to them, and they found with much uneasiness that He was more honored and loved dead than He had been while alive. They recalled His prophecy of rising from the dead. Perhaps, thought they, His followers, emboldened by the accession of the two councillors, and by the prevalent feeling of wonder at the eclipse, the earthquake, and the rending of the veil of the temple, may steal the corpse away and bury it totally out of reach; and then on the third day suddenly produce in the city one of their party dressed up as their Master risen from the dead. A tumult and a revolution would follow, “and the last error should be

worse than the first." They must, therefore, get possession of His grave.

Pilate, when they applied for a guard, wondered that Jesus was already dead. He had seen Him endure enough to kill ten ordinary men, and would not have been surprised if He had outlived the two thieves. He agreed with the chief priests that the Apostles might possibly pluck up courage enough to creep out of their hiding places under cover of the night and steal the body away—it would be an exploit, he must have thought, worthy of that kind of men. "You have a guard," said the governor to the chief priests, "guard it [the sepulchre and the corpse] as you know." They thus "made the sepulchre sure" by posting a guard of soldiers.

They also caused the tomb to be sealed; that is to say, cords were drawn across the stone that closed it and fixed to the mass of the rock with sealing wax, which was stamped with the arms of Rome, as St. Chrysostom suggests; or with the official seal of the city of Jerusalem, as others think; possibly with both. Thus if His disciples would "come and steal Him away," they must not only overcome the guard, an act of sedition and bloodshed, but they must also violate the Roman seal, a symbol as sacred as the warlike eagle itself.

So it was that the grave and corpse of Jesus were forcibly taken from His friends' custody. The power of Rome and the malice of the Jews possessed His remains, acting together to prevent His resurrection from the dead, as they had been allied before to put Him to death. But with how different a result. For, whereas Jesus offered Himself to death with eagerness, He resents and

refuses the continuance of death's dominion over Him. He will break every seal and overcome all resistance in reassuming the fullness of His bodily life. And the very fact of His dead body having been in the possession of His enemies will only the more plainly prove the truth of His resurrection.

The granting of the guard to the chief priests was Pilate's last word in these great events. He seems to have been annoyed that he should be called on to act with them any further—he thought he had done enough for them. It was with a show of irritation that he yielded to their request; as if to say: Take the soldiers and be off with you and do as you please. Put the seal of your city, if you like, on that tomb. The wretched Man is dead and buried, and with His rotting corpse are buried all the hopes of His followers. But that is not enough for you, it seems. Well, then, I authorize you to affix the seal of the Empire on His grave to show the total collapse of His attempt to be your King. And if the remnants of "that seducer's" party undertake to steal His body away and to proclaim that He rose to life by a miracle, then I give you, who represent the Jewish priesthood, Rome's military power; use it upon them as you used it upon Him. And now leave me in peace. When will you let me alone that I may attend to more important matters than this miserable business? When shall I be done with your quarrel with Jesus of Nazareth?

Aye, Pontius Pilate! Well mayst thou ask that question: When shall I be done with Jesus and His cause and His enemies? In vain, in vain, and forever in vain shalt thou wish to be done with Jesus of Nazareth,

King of the Jews. This is thy last recorded act. But to the end of time each soul that believes in Jesus will say every day of his life: "He suffered under Pontius Pilate."

All hail to the holy corpse of Jesus. It rests upon the bosom of poor mother earth as upon its chosen bed, clay upon clay, divine clay upon earthly clay, innocent clay upon clay defiled by an infinitude of sin. Thou art hidden from us, Thou body so tenderly loved, but only for a brief moment of time. Thou hast our very hearts enclosed with Thee in Thy grave, and Thou shalt soon restore them to us overflowing with the joy of Thy resurrection.

Lord Jesus, when we bury a beloved friend, it soothes our heart-break to say: Mayst thou rest in peace; and we mean his soul's rest. O now we mean Thy body, Thy poor, tortured body, when we say with inexpressible relief: Mayst Thou rest in peace in Thy quiet grave. Around this, Thy resting place, Thy loving angels watch for a little while, till the mightiest of them all shall roll back the stone to admit Thy returning Spirit. Then they shall all burst forth into their song of triumph, more ours than theirs, but better sung by heaven's voices than by earth's.

And when I come to die, O Lord, inspire many affectionate hearts to say over my grave: May he rest in peace. So that my waiting in Purgatory's sad tomb may be but for a little while, and my eternal resurrection and union with Thee may soon be hailed by my faithful angels and my devout friends in paradise.

The Prayer of St. Ignatius.

(Cardinal Newman's translation.)

Soul of Christ, be my sanctification;
Body of Christ, be my salvation;
Blood of Christ, fill all my veins;
Water of Christ's side, wash out my stains;
Passion of Christ, my comfort be;
O good Jesu, listen to me;
In Thy wounds I fain would hide;
Ne'er to be parted from Thy side;
Guard me, should the foe assail me;
Call me when my life shall fail me;
Bid me come to Thee above,
With Thy saints to sing Thy love,
World without end. Amen.

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